

Barlaston Church of England (C) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124233
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340521
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Vivienne McTiffen

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Lakin
Headteacher	Hilda Sharp
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2006
School address	Broughton Crescent Barlaston Stoke on Trent
Telephone number	01782 372543
Fax number	01782 372543
Email address	office@barlaston.staffs.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited 7 lessons and an assembly and observed all teachers twice. Meetings were held with school leaders, a group of pupils, a governor and staff. Inspectors looked at documentation, including development planning, tracking records, safeguarding procedures and samples of pupils' work. In addition, 18 parental questionnaires were analysed, along with questionnaires from staff and pupils. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

the level of progress made by all pupils especially in reading, writing and mathematics

- how well teachers use assessment information to plan for the different groups within their classes and the level of challenge
- the level of improvement made in teaching and learning and the involvement of leaders in driving up attainment and progress.

Information about the school

This is a small first school. Most pupils come from White British families and none use English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but has increased in recent years. The proportion of those with statements is slightly above that found nationally. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in a Reception class. A Children's Centre has recently opened on part of the school site and there is privately run after-school care which uses the school's hall. The current headteacher is retiring. A new headteacher is taking up the appointment in the summer term.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that has improved since the last inspection. Staff have worked hard to ensure that systems for setting challenging targets, especially for older pupils, are now well established. This means pupils are aware of what they are working towards and are involved in judging for themselves how well they are doing. The quality of teaching has improved because teachers make better use of assessment information to plan work for different abilities. This is particularly so in English and mathematics where pupils make good progress from below average starting points.

Attainment is broadly average overall and slightly above in English. This is because the school has implemented a number of strategies since the last inspection to improve reading and writing. Attainment in mathematics is average. The inspection found that there are areas of mathematics that require further development. The best progress is made in the Year 3 and 4 class because work is well matched to ability and good use is made of targets, indicating what pupils need to do to improve. Progress in the Year 1 and 2 class is not so good because the expectation of what pupils can achieve is not high enough. As a result, pupils' attainment is not as good as it could be by the end of Year 2. Pupils of all ages do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills for a range of purposes.

Barlaston is a happy school where pupils get on very well, show tolerance and respect each other. Staff know pupils very well and individual needs are identified early and met effectively. Pupils make good gains in their personal development because the level of care, guidance and support is good and the good curriculum provides plenty of opportunity for talents to flourish. Pupils' understanding of cultural diversity is not as well developed as other aspects of their personal development. This is because the school's promotion of community cohesion has had limited success in establishing links beyond the local community.

The school has successfully improved because of the efforts of the headteacher, who has been instrumental in overcoming weaknesses identified at the last inspection. This has led to improved teaching and accelerated progress for pupils. Governance is judged as satisfactory because sufficient rigour is lacking in some aspects, and areas identified as priorities have not been addressed. Managers at all levels have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development and effective plans are in place to move the school forward. This lays firm foundations for continued improvement under new leadership next term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- In the next academic year raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in Year 1 and 2, so that they make as much progress as they can
 - allowing pupils of all ages to apply their mathematical skills across a greater range of activities and subjects.
- Build opportunities for pupils to develop greater understanding of cultural diversity by extending their experiences and the school's links both nationally and globally.
- Strengthen the role of governors by ensuring they are systematically involved in evaluating and monitoring the school and its provision especially in areas that have been identified as priorities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work, together with the school's data, show that pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning. From below average starting points, they make good progress, especially in reading. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and their needs clearly identified which helps them to make good progress. Teaching assistants play an important role in helping them to do this. Effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) enhances pupils' learning. The quality of learning in lessons is good. Pupils enjoy their work. Many older pupils say schoolwork is their favourite aspect because of the challenge it offers. They like the opportunity to discuss their work with partners, which helps them make decisions. This was seen in a Year 3 and 4 mathematics lesson when pupils helped each other to solve problems. They are motivated to concentrate and work at a good pace.

Pupils have a good understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. A pupil commented, 'Everything in moderation', reflecting a good understanding of a balanced diet. Pupils are active at playtimes and engage in physical activities such as football. Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils work and play well together. They have a good understanding of how to remain safe and who to speak to if they have a problem. The School Council plays an important role in school life and is valued by pupils because it enhances school provision for example, by establishing an art club. Pupils are imaginative in their artwork and writing. They enjoy creative activities. For example, during the inspection, older pupils took part in a music festival. Displays present some good examples of artistic responses to music from other lands. All pupils accept responsibility willingly and take part in school and local events. They develop sufficient basic skills to prepare them for the next stage of learning. Attendance is average. Pupils understand what is right and wrong and cooperate well with each other. They show an interest in learning about others although their understanding of national diversity is limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Effective teaching places strong emphasis on pupils working together so they can extend their ideas. This was seen to good effect in a science lesson where pupils explored materials in their search to find those best suited to building a model aeroplane. This task motivated and engaged pupils. Activities are often based upon pupils' interests. For example, a recent visit from a puppet maker inspired them to make their own dragon shadow puppets. Such was the level of interest that the topic grew into the creation of 'Dragon' books leading to some highly descriptive and imaginative writing. Teachers know pupils well and give good verbal feedback during lessons so pupils know how well they are doing. Older pupils have clearly defined success criteria and targets which offer the right level of challenge. They know what level they are working towards. For younger pupils, expectations of what they can achieve are insufficiently high, although planning of lessons takes account of different abilities.

The curriculum offers well-organised and interesting activities through a wide range of experiences. This enhances pupils' enjoyment and contributes well to their all-round development. They speak with relish of their involvement in musical pursuits, the gardening club and work with local artists. All ages benefit from French teaching and access to the additional resources provided by the Children's Centre. There is an effective daily programme of linking sounds with letters and a range of opportunities to write. This good practice develops pupils' literacy skills and is having a positive impact

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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on attainment in English. Good use is made of ICT across subjects but the application of mathematical skills across the curriculum is not so well developed. The school offers a welcoming learning environment to all who attend. Good partnerships exist with external agencies to provide additional support for some pupils, especially those with special educational needs and statements. The 'nurture lunch' is popular with pupils and provides a quiet time for those who need it. Pupils are well prepared for their move to the middle school and good arrangements exist for those starting in the Reception class. A range of strategies is in place to encourage good attendance and recent figures show an improvement which the school is keen to maintain.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The current headteacher has involved the incoming headteacher in the school's self-evaluation process to ease transition. Good communication exists between staff in this small school but the headteacher recognises there is room for a more formal approach to monitoring teaching and learning. Pupil progress is monitored closely. Where gaps in performance are identified effective action is taken. This was the case recently in the underperformance of boys in reading. Governors are directly involved in setting priorities for improvement and support the school well. However, their approach is not systematic enough to ensure rigorous monitoring of the school and its provision. The school is pro-active in its bid to engage parents and carers as fully as possible and keep them informed about their children's learning. There are clear channels for communication with the school. The establishment of the new Children's Centre on site is seen as a positive move in encouraging more parents to be involved with the school. Partnerships with the local community and other schools benefit staff and pupils alike. Strong links with the local church are valued by parents. Racist incidents are very rare but those that have occurred have been dealt with sensitively with positive outcomes. Safeguarding arrangements are given due attention and are thorough. Strategies for the promotion of community cohesion are satisfactory. The school actively promotes cohesion within the school community and has good links with the local community. It is devising ways to reach out to other communities in order to promote pupils' understanding of other cultures within the United Kingdom and beyond.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start in the Reception class. Many come to school with underdeveloped personal and academic skills. Most make good progress and reach the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1, although, for some, skills remain lower than expected for their age. Children have good relationships with adults and each other. They play well together and share resources. They are capable of choosing what they will do and share responsibility for deciding about routines. Their behaviour is good and children act safely in the classroom environment. They recognise that fruit and water are good for them and establish regular personal hygiene routines. Teaching is good and often links learning to children's interests.

The well-organised and colourful reception classroom and newly established outdoor area offers a range of exciting activities, usually linked around a common theme. During the inspection, children engaged in tasks revolving around the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. One group busily made the Three Bears' beds whilst others set the table in the role play area for the Three Bears' porridge. Adults worked with a group in the water to discuss full and half-full while others filled different size bowls with sand. These activities made good use of all space and resources and effectively extended learning to the outside areas. Children's welfare is promoted and specific needs identified early. Activities are well planned and based upon thorough and accurate observations. There is a common sense of purpose amongst adults who work in the Reception class. Effective links exist with parents and carers and there are good arrangements for involving them in their children's learning.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents' questionnaire returns were positive. Only a very small number of parents and carers expressed any concerns. All who responded felt that their children enjoyed school and that the school kept them safe. One parent commented, 'We have been very happy with our daughter's progress at the school under the competent and assured leadership of the headteacher.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barlaston CofE (C) First School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 18 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 69 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	72	5	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	61	7	39	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	44	9	50	1	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	56	8	44	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	56	8	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	39	11	61	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	56	7	39	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	10	56	6	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	44	10	56	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	50	7	39	1	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	39	10	56	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	50	8	44	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	72	5	28	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Wednesday 24 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barlaston CofE (C) First School, Stoke on Trent, ST12 9DB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed watching your lessons, talking to you about your work and reading the questionnaires that some of you completed. This is what we found out.

You make good progress in your work so that by the time you leave your school you reach the levels expected for your age and some of you do even better. This is because your teachers make sure they keep a check on how well you are doing. You do best in English because of the good opportunities you have for spelling, reading and using your writing skills. You enjoy most things the school offers but many of you particularly enjoy your work because it is matched just right to your ability, especially for those of you in Years 3 and 4.

Adults at the school look after you well; because of that you feel safe and know who to speak to if you have a problem. Your behaviour is good and you get on very well together.

Your school has good plans in place but we are asking your headteacher and her staff to make the following improvements:

- help you to do as well as you can in mathematics by making sure teachers set the right targets for you, especially in Years 1 and 2, and to allow all of you more chances to use your mathematical skills in other subjects
- develop links with communities beyond your school and village so that you learn more about people from other cultures and communities
- make sure that those who run the school are checking that it is doing well as effectively as they can.

You can help by trying your best and always attending school unless you are unwell.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne McTiffen

Lead inspector

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