

Inspection of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School

841 Shirley Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, West Midlands B28 9JJ

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary school is a place where staff and pupils 'learn to live, love and work together'. This mission statement is clear in everything that everyone does. Parents agree. As one said: 'The school is centred around ensuring that each pupil reaches their full potential.' This is the case for every pupil, whatever their needs. As a result, pupils say that they can grow up to be anything they want to be. Their resilience, ambition and high expectations shine through.

Pupils feel safe. They understand what bullying is. Bullying very rarely happens. If it does, leaders quickly ensure that it stops. Pupils behave incredibly well in lessons and around school. They model the school's values and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils say that they feel listened to.

Leaders ensure that all pupils have access to a range of enrichment opportunities. From becoming 'Mini Vinnies', who show the caring, charitable nature of St Vincent de Paul, to visiting the local library and going on to trips to France, there is plenty on offer for all. Many pupils enjoy these opportunities.

This is a school where leaders say they achieve 'small things with great love'. Inspectors could not agree more.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School has experienced recent turbulence. The new leadership team, led by a headteacher with a strong vision and a focus on improvement, has brought about a great deal of change. Parents are pleased with these improvements. As one said, this has led to a more positive atmosphere for pupils.

Children get off to a good start in Reception. Teachers ensure that children settle quickly into routines. They learn the expectations for positive behaviour. Teachers plan activities which help children learn the skills they need. For example, children enjoy working together outside, using their senses to identify signs of seasonal change.

Leaders prioritise reading. A new phonics scheme has been introduced. Staff have been trained to deliver it well. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are taught to read using consistent strategies and high expectations. Pupils relish this. As a result, a love of reading is evident throughout the school. Leaders ensure that pupils practise reading using books matched to the sounds they are learning. Leaders make sure that pupils' reading development is regularly assessed. They quickly identify those at risk of falling behind, and give them personalised interventions to enable them to succeed.

Leaders are developing the curriculum well. In some subjects, they have clearly identified what pupils should learn. This content has been clearly and logically sequenced. This helps pupils to build on previous learning and remember more over time. Leaders also ensure that pupils take part in regular quizzes and retrieval activities, which also help pupils to remember key knowledge. However, this approach is not yet consistent across all subjects. Leaders have identified this. They know that there is still some work to be done. In a few subjects, some teachers do not have strong enough subject knowledge.

Leaders quickly identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. They are ambitious for these pupils and ensure that there is no barrier to their success. Pupils receive the support they need to succeed. All pupils happily learn and play alongside their friends.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent. Pupils and staff say that all pupils try their very best, all the time. They understand difference, and it is clear that everybody in school treats everyone else with respect. Pupils consistently model the school's values. For example, pupils have recently voted for a school sleepover in support of homelessness. They want to donate their sleeping bags to charity. School choir members have asked leaders if they can sing carols at the local 'dementia café' at Christmas. Leaders ensure that the range of opportunities on offer are accessible to all.

There have been recent changes to the governing body. New governors are keen to understand their roles and learn how best to support the school. However, governors do not yet fully support or challenge leaders as they drive improvement.

Staff are incredibly proud to work at the school. They value the changes under new leadership and feel part of the team. They know that leaders listen to them and care for them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding. They ensure that all staff receive regular training. All staff understand and use the agreed systems and processes. All concerns, no matter how small, are recorded and acted on. Leaders are vigilant to risks in the local area. They ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including as they move to local secondary schools.

Leaders ensure that all the required pre-employment checks take place before adults are appointed as staff members. However, governors are not as clear as they might be about their duties in checking some aspects of safeguarding.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are in the process of developing the curriculum. This means that in some subjects, there is still work to be done. Leaders should continue to develop their curriculum so that all subjects are well-planned and sequenced and so that assessment strategies already being used well are consistent across all subjects.
- In some subjects, some teachers do not have strong enough subject knowledge. As a result, they sometimes cannot explain content to pupils clearly or select activities that model what they want pupils to learn. Leaders should ensure that they identify where teachers need support to develop their subject knowledge in order to enable all pupils to succeed across the curriculum.
- There has been some turbulence within the governing body. The governing body is not as clear as it might be about some of its responsibilities or how to help the school move forward. Governors should ensure that all members understand their roles and responsibilities and effectively support and challenge leaders to continue bringing about improvements to the school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	103465
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10242266
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Hall
Headteacher	Jon Clinton
Website	www.sab.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2008, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School is designated as having a religious character.
- A section 48 inspection was carried out by the Archdiocese of Birmingham on 13 and 14 June 2018. The school was graded outstanding.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and geography. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans where they were available,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read.

- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the chair and representatives of the governing body, a representative from the diocese and a representative from the local authority commissioned school improvement partner.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the headteacher of the alternative provision.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around the school and at lunchtime. The inspectors spoke to pupils about pupils' behaviour.
- To evaluate safeguarding, the inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, looked at the single central record of recruitment checks, looked at safeguarding records and talked to pupils and staff.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses. The inspectors also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspectors talked to parents at the school gate.

Inspection team

Rachel Henrick, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Anne Potter

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022