

St Ambrose Barlow RC High School

37 Ash Drive, Wardley, Swinton, Manchester M27 9QP

Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Too much teaching fails to challenge pupils of all abilities, especially the most able, who make slower progress than they should in some subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than other pupils nationally with similar starting points, especially in mathematics. Funding provided for this group is not being spent carefully enough.
- Some pupils do not know where they are going wrong in their work, or have the same opportunity as others to improve the standard of their work. This is because some teachers do not routinely follow marking policies to ensure that pupils' work improves.
- School leaders' monitoring of pupils' achievement lacks rigour. They do not know if disadvantaged pupils who are currently in the school are making any better progress than they have done in the past.
- Teachers' assessments are sometimes inaccurate and targets set for pupils fail to represent consistently high aspirations.
- Pupils who have low starting points are not given enough support to help them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and to catch up with their peers. This is because the funding they are entitled to receive is not being used to help them to fill gaps in their learning.
- Checks on attendance and behaviour are not done well enough. School leaders do not know if attendance or behaviour is improving for disadvantaged pupils because they do not routinely monitor this group.
- Governors do not check that the school website provides accurate and up-to-date information for parents. Minutes of meetings show a lack of challenge and too often governors accept, without question, what leaders tell them.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils love their school and are very happy here. They show respect for their teachers and for each other and bullying is rare. Pupils' conduct around school is exemplary.
- Teachers know individual pupils well, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are well supported.
- Students in the sixth form experience a rich curriculum, which includes high-quality work experience and opportunities to work with local businesses and industries.
- A culture of raising aspirations for all pupils is supported well through careers advice and strong partnerships with external organisations.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, make strong progress through teachers:
 - making sure that pupils of all abilities, including the most able, are given suitably challenging work to do where they have to think about their work
 - enabling pupils to improve their work by consistently following school and department marking policies.

- Improve the quality of support provided for pupils who have low starting points in literacy and/or numeracy, eligible for support through the year 7 catch-up funding, by:
 - using assessment well to identify gaps in learning and teaching the knowledge, skills and concepts needed to quickly fill these gaps
 - providing suitable resources to help weak readers to improve their reading skills, including through phonics for those who need this approach
 - checking that the additional funding provided for this group of pupils is making a difference and they are quickly catching up with other pupils nationally.

- Improve monitoring systems in the school so that leaders are confident that:
 - teachers' assessment information accurately reflects the progress pupils have made since they started in the school
 - pupils' targets accurately reflect what they are capable of achieving and encourage high aspirations in the new GCSE examinations
 - achievement monitoring quickly identifies any differences for groups of pupils and these are regularly checked for any sign they are diminishing
 - behaviour and attendance checks identify any differences for groups of pupils and if strategies to remove these differences are working.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has high aspirations for all pupils in the community served by the school, but particularly those who are disadvantaged. In his first year in post, he has significantly improved the curriculum through strong links with universities, outside agencies, local industries and businesses. However, inconsistencies in the effectiveness of other leaders in school are failing to secure improvements to pupils' progress, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- Monitoring procedures are weak because some leaders do not know how to use information available in school to identify weaknesses. Following additional support to tackle weaknesses, leaders are unable to say if any difference has been made.
- Subject leaders do not check well enough that assessment information provided by teachers accurately reflects the progress pupils make from their starting points. Targets set for pupils are therefore sometimes not challenging enough.
- Leaders do not routinely monitor the differences in progress for disadvantaged pupils compared with other pupils nationally, in all years and across a wide range of subjects. Leaders therefore do not know if pupil premium funding is diminishing the wide differences seen in the past, especially in mathematics.
- Leaders do not routinely monitor the attendance of disadvantaged pupils to check if it is improving. Similarly, behaviour information is not examined carefully enough to identify if exclusions and use of the 'time out' room are reducing for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders do not check to make sure that the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is being used effectively. They do not know if this spending improved the literacy and numeracy skills for pupils now in Year 8, who were entitled to this funding last year.
- The headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well, based on the information that is available to him. School improvement plans show clearly how the headteacher is developing an ambitious culture in the school and how leaders are held to account for key actions. A commitment to quickly improve the quality of education for all pupils is evident.
- Leaders have very successfully created a caring, supportive learning environment for pupils, underpinned by strong Catholic values and belief in 'Faith in you, love in learning and hope in better'. Pupils love their school and parents are highly supportive of the school.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and culture development is a strength of the school and provides a richness to the broad curriculum. Awareness of mental health issues and self-harm has been raised through mental well-being focus days in personal, social and health education (PSHE). Focus days are used well for careers information and opportunities to develop enterprising skills and to deepen understanding of local businesses and industries. Other PSHE themes taught include issues of consent, violence, respect, anti-bullying, e-safety and citizenship.
- Leaders carefully weave themes throughout the curriculum to support pupils' understanding of British values, with improvements to the curriculum preparing pupils

better for life in modern Britain. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities have a marked effect on improving pupils' development. In addition to sporting and cultural activities, pupils can take part in the debating society, mathematics challenges, and science projects that link with the work of the international space station. The enterprise curriculum ensures that pupils also have the opportunity to develop enterprising skills to help them to become more effective learners. These activities provide a good balance with subjects taught.

- Sixth-form students in Year 12 are now able to study a wide range of academic and vocational subjects, following leaders' review of their study programme. The success of this change is seen in the sharp increase in the number of Year 11 pupils who choose to continue their studies at the school.
- Teachers greatly appreciate the opportunities they are given to help them to further develop their teaching skills and recognise the improvements being made to their practice. Leaders support teachers to work on their own small-scale research project, accredited by universities and leading to masters level qualifications. Teachers readily support each other to improve teaching and learning. They willingly, and enthusiastically, share effective practice with others.

Governance of the school

- Too often, governors accept without challenge what leaders tell them. Governors do not know enough about how the pupil premium grant is spent or if this is making any difference for the pupils entitled to this funding. Governors do not know if, or how quickly, differences with other pupils nationally are diminishing.
- Governors do not know how Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is spent, as this money appears to be combined with the pupil premium funding to pay for teaching assistants in the school. Governors do not know if teaching assistants are having any impact on improving the numeracy and literacy skills for pupils who are eligible for support through this funding.
- Although governors have a good knowledge of achievement at key stage 4, very little information is provided for them on achievement across a range of subjects at key stage 3. Governors are therefore not able to see when progress slows, or to hold leaders and teachers to account for this.
- Governors were not aware that the school website does not meet requirements because some required information is either out of date or missing. They do not know how safe pupils are when using the internet because they do not ask for evidence on the effectiveness of the school internet filtering system.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders took immediate and decisive action during the inspection to tackle weaknesses identified by inspectors.
- Further safeguarding training for all staff is planned to take place shortly to make sure they all know the recent changes to guidance, and how to look out for signs that a child may be a victim of extremist or radical views.
- Sixth form signing-out procedures with checks by leaders, discussed during the inspection, will now be introduced.

- Pupils say they feel safe at the school, a view endorsed by parents. Pupils' exceptional conduct around the school site, together with a commitment to show respect to one another, are contributing factors towards providing a secure learning environment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching does not lead to consistently effective learning and good progress for all groups of pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and the most able pupils. This is because too often teachers plan work to match the needs of the majority of a group without planning additional support or opportunities to challenge pupils.
- Teachers' expectations in lessons for the most able pupils are not high enough to make sure that this group make consistently good progress across all subjects. Leaders are aware of this and have incorporated a teaching and learning priority in the improvement plan to focus on 'teaching to the top'.
- Pupils who have studied a language in their primary school learn nothing that is new in Year 7 language lessons. Similarly, for pupils who are already accomplished musicians, there is too much repetition of prior learning in music lessons. Teachers do not take into account what pupils already know and build on this.
- Pupils told inspectors that the targets given to them by teachers in some subjects confuse them. Sometimes, targets do not reflect what pupils are capable of achieving based upon pupils' previous work in that subject, and do not appear to take sufficient account of the greater demands of the new GCSE examinations.
- Detailed written feedback is provided by some teachers, as expected by the school in accordance with department assessment policies. However, in some cases there is no expectation for pupils to follow this advice, so the considerable effort exerted in writing this detailed guidance is wasted.
- Teachers' assessments are not checked well enough by subject leaders to make sure they are accurate. For example, in Year 11 less than a quarter of pupils are indicated to be making the progress they should from their key stage 2 starting point in English and mathematics. Work in pupils' books seen during the inspection indicates that progress is much better than this.
- Assessment is a strength in some subjects, such as science, physical education (PE), information and communications technology (ICT) and Year 12 biology. Teachers use questioning well to find out if pupils understand their work and provide additional support, if needed, to quickly fill any gaps in learning. In science, pupils are encouraged to make predictions or to hypothesise and can explain the reasons why any assumptions made are incorrect. In PE, pupils quickly act on the feedback from teachers and improve their performance as a result.
- Teaching in English is consistently effective, including for students in Year 12. Teachers plan challenging activities for all pupils, leading to a secure subject knowledge.
- Teachers readily reflect on their practice and demonstrate a high level of professionalism in wanting to improve the quality of their teaching to accelerate progress for their pupils.
- Teachers willingly share effective practice within subject departments and across the school. They are committed to supporting each other as they develop their skills and readily take part in opportunities to deepen their understanding of pedagogy through

taking part in school-based research projects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good because leaders have reviewed the curriculum and are now confident that the school prepares pupils better for life in modern Britain, such as through promoting good citizenship and entrepreneurial skills.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school. They have a good understanding of e-safety and know about cyber bullying and potential unsafe situations when using social media.
- Pupils say there is very little bullying in the school and say that when this does happen they are completely confident that staff will quickly stop it from happening.
- Careers information and guidance is a particular strength of the school because of the strong and effective links made with local businesses and industries that work with the school.
- Pupils from all backgrounds talk enthusiastically about going to university and wanting to pursue careers in medicine, law, engineering and business management, for example. A culture of high career aspirations is evident throughout all year groups.
- The most able pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are encouraged to consider university as a natural progression from the sixth form. This is encouraged through visits to universities, such as on a recent trip to experience theology lectures at Cambridge University.
- Form teachers and those with leadership responsibilities know individual pupils very well. For example, pupils who are often late for school have detailed case studies showing that leaders know the reasons for lateness and know what steps have been taken to help pupils to improve their punctuality and with what impact.
- Pupils are confident discussing themes such as human rights and equalities. However, there is less depth to their knowledge of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. Leaders immediately responded to this information during the inspection by drawing up a plan to tackle this aspect through themes in assembly and broadening pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.
- Leaders remove key stage 4 pupils from their core PE lessons to provide them with the opportunity to take the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). Plans have not yet been finalised to make sure that all pupils involved receive their entitlement to two hours of physical activity each week, although the course has already started.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils say they feel well supported at this school, they like their teachers and say they feel part of the St Ambrose Barlow family. Pupils wear their uniform with pride and walk around the building in a courteous manner. They show respect for adults and visitors, are polite and welcoming and enthusiastically share their views of their school.
- Attendance is above the national average because pupils are happy at the school and they enjoy coming here. The number of pupils who are often absent is reducing,

because the recently appointed attendance officer and educational welfare officer carry out rigorous checks on the reasons why pupils are absent. Home visits are made where necessary.

- Disadvantaged pupils' attendance in the past has typically been below that of other pupils in the school and some are often absent. Leaders were unable to say if this has improved for pupils currently in the school as they do not routinely check on the attendance of groups of pupils such as the disadvantaged.
- Although pupils' conduct around the school is exemplary, behaviour is not well managed in a very small number of lessons. Low-level disruption, such as 'talking over' the teacher is sometimes the result of pupils being unsure how to make progress with their work because teachers' explanations are not good enough.
- Behaviour is not managed well while pupils are out of lessons in the 'time out' room. Although tasks are set to encourage the small number of pupils working in this facility to reflect on their inappropriate behaviours, pupils soon lose interest in this. Pupils are not always able to make progress with the work given to them by their teacher because they need further support. The supervising teacher in this room is not always able to provide this.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Disadvantaged pupils, represented by just over a quarter of pupils in the school, make slower progress in English and mathematics than other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- In 2015, fewer disadvantaged pupils made the progress they should in their GCSE examinations in English and mathematics, compared with their more advantaged classmates. Although progress in English was stronger for this group in 2016, in mathematics disadvantaged pupils in the school significantly underachieved compared with the progress made by other pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 continue to underachieve in mathematics as less than half are indicated to be making the progress they should from their key stage 2 starting points. Many of these pupils joined the school in Year 8, which leaders say is the reason for this slow progress in mathematics. However, most of these pupils are not indicated to be underachieving in English. Disadvantaged pupils are not supported well enough in mathematics to help them to catch up. Support provided through pupil premium funding is therefore making little difference.
- Leaders and governors do not know about the progress made by disadvantaged pupils across all subjects, and all years at key stage 3, because checks on this information are not routinely carried out.
- Most-able pupils in Year 11 are making slower progress in English than other ability groups, based on assessment information provided by teachers. Historically, this group (which make up over a third of pupils in each year group) have made similar progress across all their subjects to similar ability pupils nationally in their GCSE examinations. Work seen in pupils' books suggests that teachers' assessments are inaccurate and pupils are doing much better than indicated by these assessments.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported on an individual basis, with support planned to help each individual pupil to overcome their

difficulties. As a result, this group of pupils achieve as well as other pupils nationally with similar starting points.

- Pupils' oracy skills are identified as a barrier for some pupils in reaching their potential. Introduction of a whole-school project to tackle this weakness, including pupil-led assemblies, is being well received by pupils. Boys in assembly spoke with confidence and articulated their views exceptionally well as they spoke enthusiastically about the 'poppadum challenge' to support fund raising for charity.
- Leaders know the reading age of all pupils as they enter the school but there is, as yet, no strategy to improve all pupils' reading, including a phonics approach for weak readers. Leaders have very recently introduced a reading scheme for pupils. This free trial is currently being piloted and if it proves successful there are plans to extend this across the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The 16 to 19 study programme is well led, has very recently been improved and is now fully effective and better meets the needs of students in the sixth form.
- The range of subjects provided for sixth form students has been completely overhauled, changing from a discretely vocational curriculum to a blended approach consisting of a broad range of academic and vocational courses.
- Following the introduction of the new sixth form curriculum in September this year, there has been a sharp increase in the number of students in Year 11 who choose to continue their education at the school. Year 12 has increased from around 20 students in 2015 to almost 100 students in 2016.
- Teaching in Year 13 is effective because most students are indicated to be making expected progress in their vocational courses, and some students are exceeding their expectations. Year 12 have made a good start to their learning in the new academic courses being offered for the first time because teachers demonstrate good subject and course specification knowledge. It is too soon to know if this success will continue.
- Historical trends in achievement cannot be determined because of the very small size of previous classes in the sixth form since it opened in 2013.
- Students in Years 12 and 13 have the opportunity to take part in a work experience activity. Leaders select good-quality placements and carefully match these to students' needs and interests. Some students have been offered apprenticeships or jobs with providers upon leaving the sixth form because they have been well placed and have fully engaged with this experience.
- Teachers make effective links between elements of the course and students' experiences on work placements. This has a marked impact on learning, such as in health and social care where students were challenged to think deeper about the effects of dementia based upon their experience of working with clients with this condition on their placements.
- Students' personal development and welfare is well supported through effective careers information advice and guidance (IAG), recognised through the school's gold award for the quality of IAG. Strong links with employers and universities are established through the sixth form mentoring programme.
- Further enhancement to the 16 to 19 study programme is planned. Creative and digital

apprenticeships have been introduced and plans are in place to further develop the digital trailblazer apprenticeship and summer school schemes.

- The successful increase in the number of students in the sixth form has brought with it new challenges for leaders as previously they monitored attendance and punctuality on an individual student basis. The larger number makes this unmanageable. Leaders do not currently check on the attendance of particular groups of pupils.
- Almost a fifth of Year 12 has low attendance. Leaders have not yet fully explored the reasons for this, or identified ways to help these students to attend more often.
- The number of students needing or wanting to re-sit GCSEs in English and mathematics has been very small in the past. However, very few of these students improve upon the result they attained when in Year 11. Students do not currently have sufficient curriculum time to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in English and mathematics and attendance at these few lessons is too low.
- Signing-out procedures when students leave the school site are not sufficiently robust, as leaders do not routinely carry out checks to make sure all students follow the correct procedure. Leaders have plans to improve this aspect so that they are confident that all students are safe.

School details

Unique reference number	105989
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10019768

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,113
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Royle
Headteacher	Benjamin Davis
Telephone number	0161 9211570
Website	www.stambrosebarlowswinton.org
Email address	office@ambrose.salford.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2008

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about the school's most recent key stage 4 results; the pupil premium strategy and impact of spending in 2015/16; spending and impact of the year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium in the previous academic year; an annually updated special educational needs information report; and information on governance, such as relevant business and pecuniary interests. School leaders started to tackle some of these gaps during the inspection.
- Since the last inspection, the school has added an additional key stage, with the sixth

form opening in September 2013. The school has therefore grown in size, is larger than at the time of the previous inspection and now occupies a new building. A new headteacher started in July 2015.

- The school is now larger than the average-sized school and continues to be a voluntary aided school, which admits pupils from Catholic families and those from other faiths and religions.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is average and the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportions who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan are similar to the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a broadly average proportion of pupils from other ethnic groups, the majority of which are of mixed or 'other White' backgrounds.
- Three pupils attend alternative or off-site provision. One pupil attends Salford Open Learning on a full-time basis; and two pupils are educated full time at other maintained schools in the area as part of a managed-move arrangement.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection began as a section 8 no formal designation to look at the effectiveness of sixth form provision following the addition of this key stage. The inspection was deemed a section 5 to gather further information on the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons, alongside short visits to other lessons. Pupils' work in books was checked and inspectors talked to pupils about their work in lessons to find out what they were learning and to explore their attitudes to learning. Inspectors listened to pupils read aloud in class and in a pupil-led assembly.
- An inspector visited the nurture room and the 'time out' room to look at behaviour and learning for pupils working in these areas.
- Meetings were held with senior and other leaders, the chair of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Salford Diocese who is also the school improvement partner. Records of minutes taken during governors' meetings were scrutinised together with reports from external reviews of the school. A meeting was also held with a group of external partners representing local universities, businesses and industries who work with the school.
- Behaviour of pupils was observed at break and lunchtime and as pupils left the school site at the end of the day. Four separate formal meetings with pupils took place to evaluate the quality of provision for the most able pupils, the support provided for pupils with weak literacy and numeracy skills and the effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programme.
- The 38 views from parents expressed in the last 365 days on Parent View were considered, along with the school's own analyses of the views of parents, staff and pupils. An inspector spoke with a parent who requested to speak with an inspector and considered the views shared by a parent in an email to the inspection team.
- A wide range of other documentation was also considered, including information available on the school website and information on pupils' achievements, attendance and behaviour. The school's self-evaluation summary and action plan were examined along with records on the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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