

Barlows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104517
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	336324
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Anna Dawson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	505
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Horlick
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 lessons. The inspectors spent 60% of their time inspecting pupils' learning. Twenty teachers were observed including a visiting Spanish teacher. Meetings were held with the chair of governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and carers, the School Improvement Partner and the education welfare officer. The inspectors observed the school's and pupils' work, and looked at school policies, records of meetings, assessment and monitoring information, curriculum planning and the school improvement plan. In addition, 244 questionnaires from parents and carers were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether there is sufficient challenge for the lower attaining and the most able pupils in Key Stage 1
- whether the school is doing all it can to raise attendance
- whether the curriculum; the care, guidance and support of pupils; pupils' behaviour; and the extent to which pupils feel safe are strengths of the school
- the quality of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the quality and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a large school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. On-site provision includes Fazakerley Children's Centre which offers 50 full-time places for babies, toddlers and nursery-age children. Inspectors inspected the education of children in this centre; the range of services for the community and for parents and carers provided by the centre is subject to a separate inspection. There is a 25-place assessment centre, catering for the needs of children aged three to seven years with complex learning and behavioural difficulties. The school provides before- and after-school care. The school's awards include the Healthy Schools Award, Eco-Schools Award, Active Quality Mark, Dyslexia Friendly Award, Artsmark, Basic Skills Primary Quality Mark and Inclusion Charter Mark.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Barlows is an outstanding school, which is held in high regard by the community. There is a clearly understood vision encompassed in the effective leadership and management of the school. This is shared by governors, staff, parents, carers and pupils and is reflected in the exceptional quality of pastoral care, the enriched curriculum and the excellent partnerships with parents, carers and outside agencies to meet the needs of pupils. All of these attributes mean that the outcomes for pupils are outstanding. The school provides extremely well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents and carers fully appreciate the care and education provided for their children. Procedures to safeguard pupils are extremely robust. Many parents and carers endorse that they are proud their children attend this school and would not dream of 'changing anything the school has to offer' because they know their children are safe, happy and achieve well. Governors are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation, which is thorough, accurate and purposeful, if not modest in a few aspects of school performance. Consequently, there is an excellent capacity to improve still further. In view of the exceptionally good outcomes for pupils, the school provides outstanding value for money.

Pupils really enjoy their learning at this school. The vast majority comment very positively and inspectors agree that, in the word of one, 'The special thing about our school is that we always give of our best.' Pupils are motivated to achieve well by the relevant and interesting opportunities encompassed in the enriched and outstanding curriculum. They get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, achieving well to attain or exceed the expected early learning goals. At Key Stage 1 a few of the most able pupils do not do as well as they could in reading, writing and mathematics and progress is slower becoming satisfactory rather than good; pupils attain the average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because, occasionally, work is either too easy or too hard and, consequently, the progress made by these pupils is not as consistently good as that of other pupils. The national test results in 2009 confirm that most pupils attain above the national average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils achieve well, especially in Years 5 and 6, where learning is good or better and the work set for pupils is just right. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress because of the skilled help and support they receive.

Teaching is good, overall. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and manage them very well, which is evident in pupils' exemplary behaviour. Occasionally, the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent at the end of Key Stage 1. At times, teachers do not maximise opportunities to set challenging enough work to meet the needs of a few

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more-able pupils. When teaching is good or better, mainly in Key Stage 2, pupils get just the right amount of work to challenge them to make good progress and they know how to improve their work.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, which helps their personal and academic achievement. Pupils acquire an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Attendance is broadly average. While the attendance of the majority of pupils is good, a few are persistently absent.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the attendance of those who are persistently absent.
- Ensure that the more able pupils at Key Stage 1 achieve their potential in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that staff use assessment information on pupils' work consistently to plan challenging lessons
 - developing the knowledge and understanding of staff in using assessment information effectively to meet the learning needs of these pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic learners. Pupils achieve well from their varying starting points. The vast majority make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress slows down towards the end of Key Stage 1 because a few of the more able pupils do not consistently achieve their potential; consequently, standards are broadly average at Level 3. Progress then accelerates, with the most progress being made in Years 5 and 6. By the time pupils leave, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress. Pupils from the assessment centre are fully integrated into the life of the school and benefit from activities in the main school and from projects undertaken in the curriculum-themed weeks. Needs are identified and met very early in the children's centre, giving children a very good start in the early years. This makes an outstanding contribution to their learning.

Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are polite and sociable and are accepting of the views of others, having a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are excellent ambassadors for the school. For instance, the school council has represented local authority schools in meetings across the city. Pupils across the school often use signing, for instance during their assembly songs, and some participate in the local signing choir. Themed weeks, and the enterprise weeks and projects such as 'Dragons Den' make a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment, their cultural development and skills such as problem solving which stands them in good stead for future learning. Nearly all clearly understand how to stay healthy. They make healthy choices when eating snacks and lunches and are planning how to manage their newly acquired allotments. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to participate in sports for which they have gained the

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Active Quality Mark. Because pupils are taught extremely well how to stay healthy and safe, they thrive. They are confident speakers and are not afraid to make mistakes because they know their teachers listen to them and are 'really kind and helpful'.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. Observations of teaching across the school and checks on pupils' work confirm that most pupils make consistently good progress. Staff's high expectations of pupils' achievement are reflected in the challenging targets that are set for each class. In the most effective lessons work is planned to meet the needs of all pupils and teachers use assessments of pupils' work to ensure that all pupils' work consistently builds their knowledge, skills and understanding at a good pace. Occasionally, the work set for a few of the more able pupils towards the end of Key Stage 1 is either too easy or too hard and they 'mark time', mainly as staff lack some experience and confidence in using their assessment information on pupils' work to the best effect. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding. The achievements of these pupils are continually tracked and

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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they achieve exceptionally well mainly because of the skills of the very experienced staff. The school has a Dyslexia Friendly Award, which has contributed to pupils' learning in literacy across the school.

The curriculum is outstanding. It is broad and balanced and provides interesting and relevant activities for pupils. It provides enriched opportunities through themed projects for pupils to develop their learning across subjects. For example, pupils worked on their own projects during Enterprise Week and Black History Week. There are strong links with local businesses and industries for pupils to develop their enterprise skills. As a result, pupils become independent, confident and creative learners. All pupils learn Spanish and most enjoy a wide range of club activities at lunchtime or after school.

Throughout the school there are extremely positive relationships between staff and pupils, which create an effective and supportive learning environment. The impact of the school's outstanding care and support is evident in excellent standards of behaviour and pupils' social skills. There are very effective transition arrangements for pupils to move between the settings onsite or to transfer to their next phase of education so that they do not lose any ground in their learning. The special educational needs provision in the assessment centre and the main school is excellent and meets the needs of all pupils exceptionally well, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Attendance has shown an upward trend. The school has measures in place which have proved successful in reducing absenteeism. While most pupils attend well, there are a few pupils who are persistently absent.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher make an impressive team. The staff follow the lead of this senior team in 'getting ready for each day' to face the different challenges presented. Without exception, the staff support senior leaders, echoing the words of one: '[I find] it a privilege to work at the school. The children are a delight to work with and we have a fantastic team ethos.' Management at all levels is strongly committed to improving consistency in teaching and learning and providing the best possible curriculum enrichment opportunities for pupils. Members of the governing body are both supportive and act as critical friends as they challenge decisions and request information when it is considered necessary.

Procedures to safeguard pupils' well-being, safety and health are extremely rigorous. All

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staff are well trained in child protection procedures. This reflects the school policy to be fully inclusive so that all pupils play a full part in all aspects of school life. It promotes equality of opportunity well. The school takes exceptionally good account of any barriers to learning that may exist for potentially vulnerable pupils. There are robust systems to track pupils' progress. However, monitoring has lacked some of its characteristic rigour in pinpointing the support needed for a few more-able pupils in Key Stage 1.

The provision for community cohesion is good. The developing links with the community and other schools, including a link with a school in Seville, is enabling pupils to acquire a growing awareness and appreciation of diversity. The school has an excellent partnership with parents and carers who play a full part in school life. There is an outstanding partnership between the assessment centre, the children's centre and outside agencies to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as those who are most vulnerable.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start and achieve well from a range of starting points and ages. Because staff know the children very well, they provide effective care and support. There is excellent liaison between the children's centre, assessment centre and main school and children move between the settings according to their ages and needs. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and their needs are met extremely well. As a result of the high expectations of the staff, children soon settle in to all settings when they arrive and are happy, well-behaved and confident learners. Their personal and social skills are developed very well.

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Consequently, many of the children achieve, and a small minority exceed, the goals usually expected of their age by the end of their Reception Year. Babies and toddlers enjoy exploring the well-ordered and stimulating environment, becoming eager learners as their curiosity motivates them to investigate. As they grow older, children become increasingly independent, making their own choices of activities either indoors or outdoors from the accessible and excellently resourced provision. In the Nursery for instance, some children enjoyed experimenting with the paint and discovering that mixing red and yellow made orange. However, at times, as staff work alongside the children, there are missed opportunities to develop and extend children's speaking and thinking skills, mainly because planning is not always sufficiently well focused on the skills to be acquired. Provision both in the children's centre and the main school are well managed and staff are well qualified. Provision in the children's centre meets requirements for registration. Teamwork is good and staff work with common purpose to challenge children successfully so they make good progress. The assessment of children's achievements is well organised and used by staff to plan further challenges for children.

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 and carers are supportive of the school, comment positively about the quality of care and education their children receive and say that their children enjoy coming to school. Parents and carers are made to feel welcome in school, especially if they have any worries or concerns, and many endorse the view of one parent that, Barlows is an excellent school.' A few parents and carers had concerns about being informed about their children's progress, but the inspection finds that parents and carers generally get extremely good information about their children's work and progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barlows Primary 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 244 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 505 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	180	74	56	23	6	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	197	81	45	18	1	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	166	68	68	28	7	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	147	60	88	36	7	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	186	76	56	23	1	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	154	63	86	35	3	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	170	70	70	29	3	1	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)	126	52	94	39	6	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	156	64	81	33	4	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	150	61	85	35	4	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	128	52	103	42	5	2	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	167	68	73	30	1	0	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	185	76	53	22	5	2	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.



28 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barlows Primary School, Liverpool, L9 9EH

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited school. All of us thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and seeing the interesting things you do. We would have liked to have stayed longer. We would like to tell you what we found out. We agree with what you and your parents and carers told us – Barlows is an excellent school.' These are the main reasons why we thought your school was so good.

- Your headteacher and teachers work hard to help you do so well.
- You really enjoy being in school and you are lucky to have so many different activities both in and after school.
- You behave exceptionally well, listen carefully and try your best. All of this helps you to succeed.
- The staff make sure you get the help you need and look after you really well.

Even in an outstanding school some things can be made better. We have asked that your teachers look carefully at the work they give you in Key Stage 1, to help a few of you who find learning easier to make better progress. The school will continue to work with a few of your parents and carers to make sure you attend school regularly. You can all help by making sure you get to school and by always trying hard.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Anna Dawson

Lead Inspector

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