

# St. Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School

URN: 106510

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

18–19 January 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

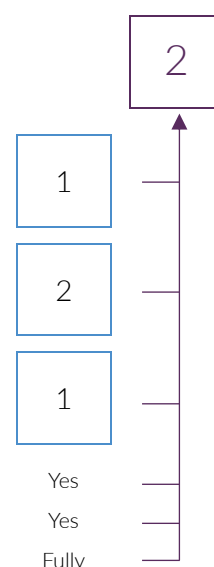
#### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



## What the school does well

- All members of staff and the governing body are highly committed to celebrating the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- The Headteacher's drive, passion, commitment, and vision for the school are sources of inspiration.
- Relationships at all levels, including those with the extended families of St. Ambrose Barlow pupils, are a real strength, with all members of the school community committed to supporting each other through their mission.
- Teaching staff engage enthusiastically with all aspects of the school's prayer life.

## What the school needs to improve

- Formalise the monitoring process to ensure that actions planned have an impact on the specific areas for improvement.
- Strengthen assessment procedures so that they ensure all pupils (specifically the more able) are appropriately challenged and understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- Expand the school's website so that it is a true reflection of the great work at the school.

## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

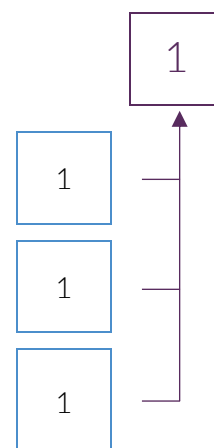
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



The sense of community which permeates St. Ambrose Barlow school is tangible. Relationships are clearly prioritised and all know, understand and live out the mission: *I have come that they may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10)*. As a result of the regular work undertaken to exemplify this, including the constant links that are made to the 5 Be's, pupils understand what it means to contribute to the mission at an age-appropriate level. One pupil told the inspection team, *'Our job is to be kind and respectful to others like Jesus was.'* Pupils are happy, they feel safe and secure, and they love coming to school. They care about the adults around them, and these special people are one of their favourite things about school. Pupils are taught to use the example of Jesus to be 'beacons of light' in their own school community. In a meeting with the inspection team, pupils from year 2 sang 'My Lighthouse' spontaneously in recognition of the part they play in sharing the St Ambrose Barlow mission. They conduct themselves beautifully in and around the school. Pupils speak well and are rightly proud of the work that they do in relation to 'helping others' One example of this is the recent shoe box appeal.

The St. Ambrose Barlow mission matters. Adults within the school share this view saying that it *'guides them to do what God wants them to do.'* Annually, staff take the opportunity to revisit and review the mission, ensuring that it is relevant and well understood by all. All staff are committed to the work of the school. In the staff survey, which was overwhelmingly positive, one commented that *'It is a privilege to go to work where everyone demonstrates love, compassion and care in everything they do.'* The headteacher is very well respected. He is highly committed and a role model to all around him. He cares deeply about all members of the school community. Children and families are well known and loved. Parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school's work saying, *'The school ethos runs through every aspect of school life. St. Ambrose Barlow is a family that welcomes all and you feel part of it as soon as you step foot through the door.'* The relationship between school and parish has been further strengthened by the children's regular

visits to Mass on Tuesdays. This is a particular highlight to the elderly parishioners who love to see the children in church. For relationships, health and sex education pupils access the archdiocesan recommended programme, *Journey in Love*, so meeting statutory and canonical requirements.

Leaders and governors are the voice of the school, celebrating its work and their shared mission at every opportunity. They recognise that the school, for many, is the pupils only experience of Church. As a result of this, they engage with parents through a variety of means to celebrate and share the Good News. Leaders work hard to maintain an open-door policy for parents and carers ensuring that all are welcome and, in turn, parents truly value this. One parent, among many similar responses, said, *'We feel that St. Ambrose embodies everything we want for our children. Not only academically but spiritually. There is an amazing sense of community and family throughout the school.'* Leaders and governors are faithful witnesses to the Gospel because they know and support those in need within the community. They demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the service of those they have identified as needing support and often go the 'extra mile' ensuring that needs of the most vulnerable are met. Staff value the support of leaders and governors, particularly the headteacher. They speak positively about the high priority that is placed on their pastoral care and wellbeing knowing that they can get help if they need it.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

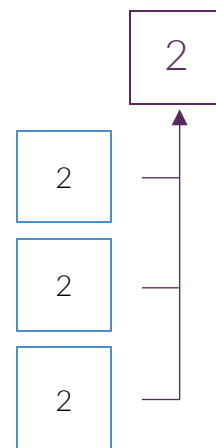
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Over time, pupils develop secure knowledge, understanding and skills. In discussion, pupils were able to articulate their use of scripture within lessons with one pupil in year 5 linking the prophet Isaiah and Jesus with 'bringing light to darkness'. Children make good progress. In some lessons, they make even better progress because adults use skilful questioning which challenges the children to think more deeply and, therefore, produce stronger outcomes. Children work beautifully overall, showing independence in their work. In the best lessons observed, pupils use 'think, pair, share' with ease, resulting in high levels of motivation and a clear expectation that all pupils will be expected to respond. Learning outcomes would be further strengthened if this technique was used consistently across the school. Pupils produce work that is well presented, and they are proud of the work they do. They are given the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways. In the year 2 classroom, the children shone as they used role play to re-enact parts of the Mass. As a result, learning was fun and memorable allowing pupils to attach meaning to the relevant skill words. In discussion with pupils, recall of information learnt over time was variable with some children saying that they prefer more active tasks because it helps them to 'remember better.'

Teachers at St. Ambrose Barlow are confident and have a good subject knowledge. They value the support of the subject leader, headteacher and each other to develop their skills further. Teachers recognise the impact of religious education on the spiritual and moral development of pupils and, regardless of their own faith experiences, they emphatically support the work of the school. Where practice is stronger, teachers give pupils time to reflect, and skilful questions are used so that pupils benefit from the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding. The school's assessment system is used by staff to inform their planning. However, work scrutiny indicates that pupils are not always clear about what it is that they need to do to make their work even better and some pupils are not challenged enough. Opportunities to celebrate the good work of pupils is not always explicit. Provision would be even better if, in line with their policy on feedback, staff provided clear steps for improvement and challenge for the more able. Additional adults within the classroom are a welcome part of the team and they care about the pupils and teachers. They are used primarily to support children with additional needs across the school.

Leaders and governors ensure that resources for religious education are used appropriately to support learning. They ensure that professional development opportunities are provided so that staff are well equipped to deliver the curriculum. The staff, in turn, are particularly complimentary about the support they receive both formally and informally. The school currently uses the archdiocesan recommended programme, *Come & See*. Early years and year 1 are part of the diocesan coordinated implementation of content for the new Religious Education Directory. In addition, year 6 practitioners are voluntarily trialling aspects of the new directory, which have been favourably received. The subject leader has a vision for the school, and, alongside the headteacher, he works hard to ensure that outcomes for the pupils remain at the forefront of the decision-making process. He supports colleagues within the school, liaises well within the local cluster group and contributes to the broader work of the archdiocese. Leaders and governors are passionate about and committed to the work of the school and they have a good understanding of the provision for religious education. The impact of their work would be further strengthened if the monitoring and evaluation cycle was reviewed and formalised so that all actions undertaken by the school are clear and measurable.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

1

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

1

Prayer is central to all aspects of life at St. Ambrose Barlow. Consistently well-planned opportunities to worship ensure that the daily experiences of pupils are enriched. Pupils enjoy prayer and worship. They sing joyfully and they reflect respectfully during periods of silence. The pupils are kind and considerate towards others when they gather for prayer, and they think about how their actions should be influenced by scripture and by living their mission. Pupils look forward to gathering, and they are attentive and responsive. In conversation with the inspection team, one pupil commented, '*Prayer time helps me to stay calm and focussed.*' Opportunities to lead prayer across the school means that pupils can develop their skills appropriate to their age and development. Pupils select from a repertoire of traditional prayers compiled by staff who ensure their regular use.

As soon as pupils start school, they are taught how to participate in prayer. The subject leader has appropriately planned themes to support the delivery of prayer and liturgy across the school and ensures that this is central to school life. Staff are complimentary of the support they receive from both the headteacher and dedicated subject leader who ably model all aspects of prayer and liturgy. However, formally planned opportunities to analyse current practice across the school would further develop the strength of all staff. Teachers regularly give pupils the opportunity to lead on various aspects of their prayer. In the year 6 class, pupils confidently set up the focus table and read from scripture. In the year 1 and 2 classes, selected pupils chose appropriate prayers to compliment the theme and all pupils sang enthusiastically to reflect on the scripture used for prayer. In every classroom, space is made to enhance opportunities for prayer. To develop provision further, areas outside the classrooms and across the extensive school grounds could be better utilised so that there are opportunities for spontaneous prayer for children and staff. The introduction of Tuesday class masses which are attended on a weekly basis has supported the children in learning the correct responses and increased their participation. This has positively impacted upon the elderly parishioners who eagerly anticipate their arrival. One governor commented that, '*The parishioners love seeing the young ones at church...it lifts spirits.*'

The headteacher leads by example. He uses his knowledge and skills to ensure that experiences of prayer and liturgy within the St. Ambrose Barlow community are inspiring. The subject leader ably supports his colleagues and the school community by providing the relevant policies and whole school staff development opportunities. Staff at all levels are a strength of the school. They are exemplary role models and are committed to the work of the school and each other. They ensure that they liaise with the wider community to include them in the prayer life of the school and to support the prayer life of pupils. Parents appreciate this saying, *'Our children are taught to embrace their faith, grow in God's love, and live out the Gospel values.'* Early careers teachers and additional adults are well guided by leaders, ensuring that they receive high quality support which impact favourably on practice. The link governor for religious education is a familiar visitor to school and undertakes monitoring activities, participates in prayer and liturgy sessions, and works with the subject leader. Governors are highly committed to the St. Ambrose Barlow community. They support and value the regular opportunities to share in the prayer life of the school.



## Information about the school

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| Full name of school                            | St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School  |
| School unique reference number (URN)           | 106510   |
| School DfE Number (LAESTAB)                    | 3593415  |
| Full postal address of the school              | St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School,<br>Manchester Road, Astley, Tyldesley, Manchester, M29<br>7DY |
| School phone number                            | 01942 883912   |
| Headteacher                                    | Gareth Doherty   |
| Chair of Governors                             | Caroline Lowe  |
| School Website                                 | <a href="http://www.saintambrosebarlow.wigan.sch.uk">http://www.saintambrosebarlow.wigan.sch.uk</a>      |
| Trusteeship                                    | Diocesan   |
| Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable) | N/A  |
| Phase  | Primary  |
| Type of school                                 | Voluntary Aided School   |
| Admissions policy                              | N/A  |
| Age-range of pupils                            | 4-11   |
| Gender of pupils                               | Mixed  |
| Date of last denominational inspection         | 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2016   |
| Previous denominational inspection grade       | Outstanding  |

## The inspection team

Rachael Tyler  
Alan Saunders

Lead  
Team

## Key to grade judgements

| Grade | England              | Wales  |
|-------|----------------------|--|
| 1     | Outstanding          | Excellent  |
| 2     | Good                 | Good   |
| 3     | Requires improvement | Adequate and requires improvement                |
| 4     | Inadequate           | Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement |

