

INSPECTION REPORT St. Ambrose Barlow RC High School

Inspection date 25th September 2013

Reporting Inspector Sister Judith Russi
Mr Stephen Jones

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic High School

URN 105989

Age range of pupils 11-19 years

Number on roll 916

Appropriate authority The Governing Body

Chair of Governors Mr Philip Royle

Head teacher Mrs Marie Garside

Date of previous inspection December 2008

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	1	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Ambrose Barlow High School is an average sized Catholic High School serving a wide range of parishes including St Charles, St Mark's, St Mary's, Swinton, St Luke's, Irlam of the Height, St Peter and St Paul, St Charles, St Edmund's and Christ the King. The school is both a Specialist College in Technology and Applied Learning. Under the BSF programme, a new school building was completed in April 2013 which accommodated 750 pupils. However, in the past year and during the school's construction, major changes occurred due to the realignment of St George's Catholic High School and St Ambrose Barlow. This has resulted in the need for an extension to be built onto the existing building to accommodate all pupils from both schools and will be complete by September 2014. The phased intake of year 7 and 10 pupils, plus the development of 6th Form provision in September 2013, will be completed in 2014 with the transfer of the remaining St George's pupils. The overall social and economic background of pupils is broadly average though a significant proportion of pupils come from areas of major social deprivation. St Ambrose Barlow has been accredited with many national awards including National Teaching School status, the School Inclusion Award and Dyslexia Friendly Status. 51% of teaching staff and 35% of support staff are Roman Catholic. 92% of pupils are baptised Roman Catholic.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Ambrose Barlow High School is an outstanding Catholic school which puts Christ at the centre of all its endeavours. The deliberate and inspirational option for those in the greatest need has been locally and nationally acclaimed through a wide variety of awards. The school continually strives for excellence offering both pupils and staff a rich faith experience permeating all aspects of school life. The new learning environment has been designed to ensure equality of access for all resulting in an outstanding community for learning. The cohesive team of governors and staff provide a challenging and innovative vision which is translated and understood at all levels. The impact of the school's commitment to excellence throughout has raised standards to a high level.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- Creativity, innovation and the desire to be the best you can be, permeates all aspects of the school.
- The Chaplaincy provision is inspirational.
- Inclusion, behaviour and care for all are excellent.

THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The Governors and the leadership team, clearly demonstrate their commitment to the mission of the Church in education. The impact of their decisions is seen in the design of the new school which places a beautiful chapel at the centre and the dedication of considerable resources to ensuring the inclusion of those on the margins of society and in the greatest need as a top priority. The whole school mission for excellence is echoed in the schools Mission Statement, summarised in the words '*Achieving Excellence*'. The Head teacher, as a National Leader of Education, continually strives to support other Catholic schools as a top priority. Head teachers of partner schools spoke of the excellent links and support they receive from St. Ambrose Barlow. Leadership at all levels within the school is constantly being developed in order to promote potential and share best practice. The commitment to the beliefs and values of the school was evident at all levels. Staff and pupils demonstrated a common vision and understanding and were confident in articulating their distinctiveness as a Catholic school. The entitlement of all pupils to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is led by the Deputy Head teacher and is in the process of being tracked across the whole curriculum.

The leadership of RE is recognised as being of the utmost importance and fully supported by the leadership of the school. The department is led and staffed by a highly trained and competent team. Together they are striving to be the lead area of learning throughout the school and have revised the teaching and learning strategies to achieve this in the near future.

Pupil leadership has been further enhanced by the appointment of Pupil Chaplains who along with the School Council and prefects make an active contribution to the leadership of the school.

THE QUALITY OF WORD IS OUTSTANDING

The school is guided by a mission statement that is known, lived and impacting on every aspect of the school community. Children enjoy R.E which is accessible to all through clearly structured differentiated teaching and learning. Comprehensive and thorough systems for assessment and the recording of progress have been developed across all year groups to ensure that every student knows and understands their next steps for learning.

Examination analysis shows consistent progress since the last inspection with students now achieving grades almost in line with other core subjects. However, the residual remains positive, showing substantial progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. There is evidence that this will be maintained over the next few years. Religious Education is clearly at the core of the Core Curriculum. Collectively, pupils receive a minimum of 10% RE curriculum time at Key Stages 3 and 4 and 5% at Key Stage 5. The Religious Education budget is set according to the needs of the curriculum. The requirements of the RECD are clearly met and there is evidence of curriculum development in the past twelve months. The Head of Department leads in developing ways to make this subject contemporary, lively and interesting. The teaching of scripture is particularly significant and the RE department continues to find creative ways of presenting the Gospel message. The Deputy Head teacher leads the development of SMSC throughout the curriculum and is currently monitoring and evaluating its impact across the school.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

St Ambrose Barlow is an outstanding Catholic community that seeks to welcome and nurture pupils and staff at all levels. Pupils and staff spoke highly of the welcome they had received. Pupils, parents and staff all agreed that St Ambrose Barlow is a safe and happy environment and spoke of their pride at being a part of the St Ambrose Barlow school community. Partner primary Head teachers identified that *"...there is a real presence of Christ working throughout the school"*.

The school recognises the importance of each individual person and this is reflected in the way people are welcomed into the school. Transition from Key Stage 2 is outstanding and demonstrates the very best of practice for all pupils. Form teachers and pastoral staff work interdependently to support and meet the needs of pupils in their care. The school is visibly proud of being Catholic and places Christ at the centre of the educational enterprise, where pupils are encouraged to live out his message in word and action. The school is a calm, peaceful and safe environment. Individual and personalised procedures are in place to support the needs of pupils who may need extra support. This is a school where all people matter and the staff and students are genuinely proud of their Catholic community. The development of the high profile Chaplaincy Team continues to foster excellent relationships, reaching out to the marginalised and vulnerable members of the community through fund raising for the various school charities.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

The pastoral care of pupils and staff is recognised as being of paramount importance and this is visible both in and out of the classroom. Pupil voice and parent questionnaires provide numerous examples of care and support for people in need. Parents spoke of there being a seamless support system *"like a golden thread"* for all pupils throughout their time at St Ambrose Barlow. An abundance of care permeates the whole of the school, recognising the worth and value of each individual person. The examples of inclusion are excellent and can be seen in all curriculum areas.

Substantial evidence from pupils and parents illustrates that transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is carefully planned and managed to meet the needs of individual children. This process is greatly appreciated and acknowledged by staff and parents in the partner primary schools. The provision of Special Educational Needs in the school is excellent. The support for vulnerable children is a real strength in the school and the SMT, led by the Head teacher, actively promote the welfare of everyone in the school community at all times.

The SRE programme supports the personal, spiritual and social development of pupils bringing together several departments, including, PSE, RE, PE, Science, Geography and Citizenship. This programme is cross-referenced with key Church teaching and schemes of work.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The whole school policy for prayer and worship is creative, innovative and contemporary. Examples of creativity range from pupil designed prayer and worship experiences to development of a 'street dance' group and a Gospel Choir, to enhance times of prayer, worship and para-liturgies all of which were seen to be of a high standard. The new Chapel provides an oasis of peace and spiritual calm. The Lay Chaplain and her team are having a significant impact on the prayer life of the school. The year 7 retreat day led by the Chaplain was of a very high quality and all pupils were fully engaged in the activities and reflections. Times of prayer and reflection are incorporated into RE lessons and led by the pupils. Staff and pupils are confident in leading prayer and worship and are well supported by the ideas posted for daily prayers and worship on the school intranet. A power point presentation is provided daily for each form tutor to use with their tutor groups.

The Chaplaincy team's development plan demonstrates a wide range of prayer and liturgical celebrations and the enthusiasm for liturgy, prayer and worship is a distinguishing feature of the school. The staff and pupil prayer groups are well attended and growing in numbers. The school is well supported by local clergy who take it in turns to say Mass and contribute to the development of prayer and worship throughout the school. Prayer and worship are well resourced and training and support is ongoing for both pupils and staff.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

Witness to the centrality of Jesus Christ and the Gospel was found to be outstanding. This was clearly evident in the way in which the newly arrived in the school spoke of how they felt valued and respected. The preparation and care shown for the start of the 'new school community' showed that every person joining the school would feel at home and loved. To this end staff and pupils had clearly set out to ensure that *'This school is distinguished by the quality of care extended to all pupils and staff'*. Pupil voice in the development of the Catholic life of the school is developing rapidly. Pupils and staff spoke with confidence and enthusiasm about their faith. The option for those in the greatest need at home and abroad was explicit across all aspects of the school. The inclusion policy and practice was a living testimony to dignity and respect for each member of the community.

The excellent practice of Chaplaincy at St Ambrose Barlow offers a valuable resource as a model for other schools in the Diocese. Considerable resources have been allocated by the Governors and senior leadership team for the development of this initiative. It is clear that the school stands as a witness to Christ's love, justice, forgiveness and compassion. The many inspirational quotes painted in large letters across the fabric of the corridors and communal spaces serve to remind all of the sacredness and gift of life and learning.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- Continue and further develop the outreach work with partner Catholic schools across the Diocese.
- Develop the 6th Form RE provision to incorporate a broad spectrum of students
- To continue the development of creativity in to teaching of R.E by further developing independent learning strategies across all Key Stages.

October 14th 2013

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave us when we came to visit you. Your behaviour and courtesy are a great credit to you all.

St Ambrose Barlow is an outstanding school and in some areas it is excellent. This is because everyone is focused on your Mission Statement striving to always be the very best you can be.

We could clearly see that you take your learning very seriously and are proud of your achievements. To assist your learning even further your teachers are going to help you develop a higher level of independent learning and research skills.

You told us that you enjoyed your RE, the Chaplaincy and charity work activities and were keen to take up leadership roles in the school. This is excellent and we could see how seriously you take your learning. We saw that you can make connections between what you are learning in RE with other areas of the curriculum and your daily lives. Thank you for letting us share so much of what you are doing.

We were very impressed by Year 7 and their retreat day activities. Thank you for inviting us to be part of the day. The Chaplaincy team has grown enormously. You are doing great work of which you are rightly proud. This is something we feel you can really share with other schools.

God bless you all and have a really happy term.

Yours sincerely

Sr Judith Russi

(Section 48 Inspector)

Summary Report to Parents

On 25th September 2013 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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