



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. AMBROSE BARLOW CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ASTLEY

Inspection Date Tuesday 22 November 2011

Inspectors Mrs. Denise Hegarty, Mr. Mike Halford

Unique Reference Number 106510

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic Primary

Age range of pupils 4 – 11 years

Number on roll 205

Chair of Governors Mrs Delia Fletcher

Head teacher Mr. Bernard Dorgan

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Date of last inspection Tuesday 29 September 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about the school

St. Ambrose Barlow is a smaller than average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Astley in the Wigan district of the Archdiocese and serves the newly formed parish of St Margaret Clitherow. There are 205 children on roll of whom 197 are baptised Catholic and 8 come from other Christian denominations. At the school, there are 10 teachers of whom 9 are Catholic and 7 teach Religious Education. Eight teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Inspection Judgements

**Overall effectiveness:
how effective the school is in providing Catholic Education**

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main Findings:-

St. Ambrose Barlow is an outstanding Catholic Primary School. The clear vision for Catholic Education is driven by deeply committed leaders and embraced by the whole school community. This vision is clearly manifest in the school's Mission Statement and permeates every aspect of school life.

Since the last inspection the school has securely maintained and built on previously outstanding performance. Self evaluation is comprehensive, rigorous and accurate. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. There is no significant difference in performance between groups of pupils and outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are also outstanding. The school is very successful in addressing the areas it has identified for improvement. Senior Leaders are deeply motivated, highly committed and consistently communicate their high expectations and aspirations to staff in order to secure improvement. Religious Education and the Catholic Life of the school are given a high priority. Realistic and challenging plans stem from the accurate analysis obtained through monitoring and are being used effectively to improve outcomes. Any underperformance is challenged. Staff are affirmed and supported in their roles. They are justly proud of their school, enjoy their work here and feel valued.

Given the dedication of leadership, the commitment to continuing professional development of staff, the rigorous nature of self evaluation and drive for improvement, the school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Give the children opportunities to develop skills to plan and lead Collective Worship by:
 - providing opportunities and direction for pupils to have a higher level of active participation consistently throughout the school in an age and stage appropriate manner.
- Continue to implement other targets set out in the school's Self-Evaluation Document. That includes:
 - continuing to ensure work is consistently differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils;
 - increasing the involvement of parents at assemblies and class acts of worship;

- further involving the governors in some areas of monitoring Religious Education and Catholic Life.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Achievement in Religious Education is outstanding and attainment is above average. Pupils make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are very positive and enthusiastic about their learning. Analyses of assessments undertaken provide evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate or higher levels for their age and stage of development in each key stage. There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are outstanding. Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate as they assimilate the key words from the topic, retell stories from Scripture and relate their own life experiences to the Christian understanding of the topics. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age and capacity and some exceed expectations. They are developing the skills that enable them to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Any underachievement is identified and challenged. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively. They are highly motivated to learn and have positive attitudes towards their lessons. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their Religious Education lessons. This is evident in the enthusiasm shown and in the way they co-operate together as they work together.

Pupils are actively involved in developing and evaluating the Catholic character of the school e.g. by looking at the school's Mission Statement and investigating what it means for them. They have a sense of belonging to the school community and value and respect other members. They know, understand and live out their Mission Statement. Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school and wider community e.g. as prayer partners, eco-councillors and members of the Gardening Club. At interview, children spoke of how proud they were of organising the Shoe Box appeal. Year six pupils especially benefit from participation in away days and retreat activities. Pupils are considerate and caring of others both in school and the wider community. They support a variety of local, national and global charities including Nugent Care and CAFOD. They have a good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships taking an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions. They praise and acknowledge the contribution of others and show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences.

Pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship very well. They act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings. They reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and confidently. No-one is expected to act in a manner contrary to their beliefs and all show mutual respect. Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing and they show maturity and togetherness in the way they participate in celebrations and liturgies. They are becoming familiar with a variety of prayer styles, are open to the Word of God in the Scriptures and live out the Gospel message in their lives.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
How well pupils achieve in Religious Education	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education 	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	2

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

The quality of teaching is consistently very effective in ensuring that pupils are interested, engaged and make outstanding progress. Information from assessments is used to inform planning and the language from the Levels of Attainment is very effectively used to ensure work is pitched at the correct level for the children. Thus, teachers take into account pupils' prior learning and ensure differentiated tasks when planning so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding. They provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Good use is made of time and resources e.g. information and communication technology. Teachers and others use a variety of strategies to sustain and motivate pupils. Marking celebrates achievement and progress and pupils are given opportunities to discuss their work and progress. To be even more effective, marking should be consistently developed to enable pupils to understand the next steps to take in their learning.

The assessment of pupils' work in Religious Education is very good. The school's assessment strategies provide accurate information on the achievement of all the pupils. Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle any underachievement. Most teachers enable pupils to evaluate and assess their own work. Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance. Assessment information is collated by the subject leader and shared with the governors and parents. Achievement and effort are celebrated. Pupils are affirmed and know how well they are doing.

The curriculum is outstanding in meeting pupils' needs. The school using the '*Here I Am*' programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets national and archdiocesan requirements.

Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Some imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning e.g. through poetry, and art. Termly Religious Education newsletters are provided for parents to inform them of how they can play their part in developing and supporting the Religious Education of their children. Children are frequently given tasks to complete at home with their families. The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate. Enrichment activities such as visits and visitors

have a positive impact on the curriculum. The Religious Education curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils each have a Religious Education Journal to record their thoughts as teachers encourage them to reflect carefully on what they have learned.

The Collective Worship provided reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the Faith backgrounds of the pupils outstandingly. Good resources, especially the use of ICT, are provided to enhance worship and are kept up to date. An excellent policy and guidelines are in place. Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. Children are enabled to pray formally and informally. The school provides opportunities for staff to develop the skills in planning and leading Collective Worship. The teachers are beginning to provide the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan and lead in Collective Worship, themselves. Opportunities are provided for parents, carers the local and wider Faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of the '*Here I Am*' programme and the Church's liturgical year. Family celebrations take place at the end of each '*Here I Am*' topic

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	1
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the schools

Leaders and managers are outstanding in promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school and show an outstanding commitment to, and understanding of the Mission of the Church. They have high expectations and aspirations for all members of the community. This is reflected in the school's own Mission Statement which is regularly reviewed. Its aims and objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life and are a useful tool by which the school can evaluate its effectiveness. The Mission Statement is at the very heart of everything that goes on in the school – it is known owned and lived out by the whole community who are all utterly committed to its sentiments. Opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and Mission of the school.

There is deep commitment and drive for improvement demonstrated by the head teacher and subject leader. Ongoing self evaluation ensures that continuous improvements are made in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. The Self Evaluation Document, provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge. Their analysis provides a basis to celebrate the school's strengths and outlines areas for development.

There is continuing professional development for all staff available to enable them to understand the Church's Mission in Education, how to play their unique

part in it and how to deliver the 'Here I Am' programme effectively. All staff members are actively encouraged to keep their knowledge and understanding of the subject up to date through courses and in-service training provided by the subject leader and the Archdiocese. As part of their Performance Management teachers are given a Religious Education objective. A range of opportunities for spiritual and moral development are provided for staff and pupils such as the Collective Worship Week which provided experiences for appreciating awe and wonder.

Leaders and managers use monitoring data very well to evaluate the school's performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements. There is a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme undertaken for teaching and learning, planning, children's work and assessments. The findings contribute to the Self Evaluation Document and this is monitored throughout the year. The subject leader fulfils his role in an outstanding manner with great commitment. He is an excellent role model for others to emulate. Archdiocesan briefings and training sessions are well attended. New initiatives are introduced when appropriate, best practice shared and support given to colleagues as required most especially through staff meetings. As a member of the Governing Body, he is able to keep them fully informed on a regular basis. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in their delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary.

Governors fulfil their roles and responsibilities very well. The subject leader keeps them fully informed and updated. They have helped to shape the direction of the school through setting targets and providing support to all. They are regular visitors and are enthusiastically involved in the life of the school. They have ensured there is an effective budget to fund Religious Education and provide resources to enhance the Catholic life of the school. The school tracks pupil achievement in Religious Education, and governors have the data to be able to analyse the school's performance in the subject and to monitor what needs to be done to further raise standards.

Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the beliefs and values of all. There are positive relationships at every level within the school. This is a tightly knit, welcoming community where every person is truly valued.

The use of the Religious Education Programme, '*Here I Am*', provides outstanding support to community cohesion. Children have had opportunity to explore the beliefs and values of Judaism and Sikhism. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. Dialogue and collaboration is encouraged with people who hold different beliefs and values. Other curriculum areas help to develop the children's cultural awareness, particularly through the use of music.

Parents are consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school. The Parent Teacher Association is very active and supportive of the school. Parents' views and opinions are valued. The school website is another vehicle used to keep them fully informed of what their children are learning in Religious Education and of what is happening in the Catholic Life of the school.

The school is forging excellent links with the newly formed parish of St. Margaret Clitherow, and the priest is a frequent visitor to the school who strives to celebrate Masses and liturgies with the school community as often as possible and is often invited to support the Religious Education Programme with classes across the school. He leads Year 6 retreat days which are thoroughly enjoyed and remembered by pupils. Classes are regularly invited in turn to lead the Family Mass at church by reading and through singing.

The pupils are developing an understanding of the common good and an awareness of global responsibilities. The whole community shows a concern for the well-being of those less fortunate than themselves both by becoming better informed and by raising funds and resources for local, national and global charities e.g. in their donations to the Good Shepherd fund for Nugent Care and CAFOD. Members of the Gardening Club look after the school site to ensure they do their part to care for God's world.

The school is a hive of activity at all times with staff members and other adults giving the children many opportunities to make use of all their talents in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. St. Ambrose Barlow is preparing children to become confident, well-rounded, outgoing future citizens of the world who have a sound knowledge and understanding of how a community works together to love and support its members and to care for their environment.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met	2
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	1