



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Monitoring Visit

### **ST AMBROSE BARLOW CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL HALL GREEN, BIRMINGHAM**

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Inspection dates	10th June 2013
Reporting Inspector	Joseph Skivington

Monitoring Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Very Reverend Canon J Gunn
School address	841 Shirley Road Hall Green Birmingham B28 9JJ
Telephone number	0121 464 2791
E-mail address	enquiry@sab.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	December 2008
DFE School number	330/3380
Unique Reference Number	103465

<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Mrs Maria Winters</b>
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE





June 2013

Diocesan Education Service,  
Don Bosco House,  
Coventry Road,  
Coleshill,  
B46 3EA

Mrs Maria Winters  
Headteacher  
St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School  
841 Shirley Road  
Hall Green  
Birmingham  
B28 9JJ

Dear Mrs Winters

Section 48 Monitoring inspection: June 10th 2013

Thank you for the welcome you, your staff and pupils gave to me when I inspected your school on Monday June 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 and for the information you provided both before and during the inspection. I am grateful for the time given by all including the chair of governors/parish priest in speaking with me.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last section 5 inspection to be an outstanding school and because it is now five years or more since you last received a section 48 inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning for Catholic life and religious education. In order to make this judgement I read school documents, including a summative self-evaluation, interviewed senior leaders, the chair of governors, the subject leader for RE, and a group of Year 6 pupils, observed several part lessons and acts of worship, and looked at a sample of pupils' written work. In addition, I gathered evidence of some of the outstanding practice in the school as part of a diocesan wide survey of good practice in Catholic life and religious education.

St Ambrose Barlow School provides an outstanding quality of Catholic education. This is the judgement arrived at by the school in its summative self evaluation, and the evidence gathered in the monitoring visit supports and validates this conclusion. The quality of the provision and outcomes for Catholic life and collective worship is outstanding, mirrored by the pupils' outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school and response to collective worship. There is a deeply embedded culture of reflectiveness and self evaluation which has been adopted by the pupils themselves and it is their voice, and their ownership of their education, which confirms what the school thinks of itself. For example, they have evaluated the school mission statement and worked in their classes to interpret it in their language. Lent provided an ideal time for them to illustrate the partnership of home, school and parish through art work and how they relate these to all aspects of their school life. Staff and parents and governors were all drawn into this process of identifying elements of the mission and reflecting on their role. Pupils take responsibility for the liturgical life of the school, providing feedback on the prayer corners, planning for the prayer garden, the impact of the prayer bags - to which the parish priest and parents add their own delighted comments – the colourful displays around the school, and not least the preparation for Masses, currently the planning of their own Leavers Mass. All are challenged to complete the straight question 'I participated by.....'

It is this feedback and comment from the whole school community which provides accurate and reliable judgements which are then effectively acted upon by the governors and senior leadership. The school can point to processes that secure detailed information on the health of the Catholic ethos, for instance, the frequent ethos walks with governors, the evaluation of prayer focuses, the constant revising of the sacramental programmes to make them more meaningful (in the case of Confirmation exploring a new DVD for parents), the regular seeking of links between subjects and the RE programme, and nurturing the spiritual life of the staff through praying together and the opportunity for retreat. The annual day of recollection on vocation for staff and governors was a fruitful reminder and check on the place of the school in the Church's wider mission and the part that each individual has to play – a salutary examination of conscience and motivation. An audit of pupils and Catholic life provided the ideas and feedback to incorporate new objectives into the school



development plan, which is robustly monitored by leadership and governors to ensure success within the time frames drawn up. The governing body are knowledgeable and hands on in their approach to the daily running of the school, scrutinising and probing reports and reviews with a critical eye. Detailed self evaluation takes place during weekly link governor's meetings, the headteacher's meeting with the chair, and the at the ethos committee. This might be based on observations of collective worship which are weekly assessed for quality and impact, or the speed of progress in incorporating Catholic life and values into all the curriculum subjects. The professional development of staff is encouraged and the governors, with senior leadership, react promptly to staff requests, for example, a teacher who asked for time and training on planning her RE lessons. Good use is made of the Birmingham Catholic Partnership for courses and other professional development, a direct consequence of constant review on the quality of provision and how it could be bettered.

The school has judged provision for religious education, including teaching, assessment and curriculum as outstanding and the evidence amply supports this. Teaching is consistently good and better over time, a judgement secured through detailed 'check list' lesson observations and the scrutiny of the pupils' work over time. Pupils themselves readily contribute through questionnaires and interviews to a judgement on the quality and relevance of their learning. This feedback enables teachers to reshape their lessons and strategies to more closely meet the learning needs of their pupils. A very effective monitoring tool has proved to be the end of topic review by every teacher, which is fed back and shared, so that levels are jointly moderated and dated at least once every half term. This is then fed back to every pupil with targets set in the context of the child friendly level indicators in their book. Also an opportunity is taken to reflect on what went well and what could be better next time. The curriculum and schemes of work are constantly being revised and honed. A subject audit to highlight how RE can be extended to other subjects has been made and is now being implemented, for example, in science and history – examining the local Catholic history in the area. Parents are closely involved in the RE programme, invited to discuss the relationship education programme, the Inspire workshops, but also responding positively to the prayer bags, supporting the prayer garden and generally helping the school in all its activities. School and parish work closely together pray together, and share the Sunday Mass in community together.

The outstanding outcomes are directly due to the leadership and management being reflective, self evaluative and giving close attention to every detail and aspect of school life. Its self evaluation is robust. It is both accurate and reliable precisely because it seeks feedback and pointers to improvement from pupils, staff parents, governors and parishioners. This in turn ensures that the whole school community has ownership and responsibility for its continuing excellence, because it has a clear picture of where it is now, and the steps it must take to maintain the highest quality of Catholic education.

The school's self evaluation and improvement planning are accurate, reliable, and highly effective in improving outcomes for the pupils.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Skivington  
Diocesan Inspector