



Barrow Hall Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111234
Local Authority Warrington
Inspection number 288898
Inspection date 6 March 2007
Reporting inspector Margot D'Arcy

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Barrow Hall Lane
School category	Community		Great Sankey, Warrington
Age range of pupils	4-11		Cheshire WA5 3AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01925 728197
Number on roll (school)	507	Fax number	01925 721581
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Paul Walmsley
		Headteacher	Mr Geoff Bowles
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is bigger than most primaries and is situated in a suburb of Warrington in Cheshire. Although the proportion of pupils taking free school meals is below average, the area in which the school is situated is broadly average in social and economic terms. Most pupils are White British, with small numbers from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small number is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

The school has been awarded Investors in People, Activemark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Barrow Hall is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Pupils achieve well academically and personally because teaching and the curriculum are good and the quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Good leadership and management from the headteacher, senior staff and governors underpin the school's success. Its mission, 'I am here to be valued, to feel secure and to learn' is well met. Parents show good support for the school, helping out in lessons and raising significant amounts through fund-raising to purchase additional resources. From a broadly average starting point on entry to the Reception classes, pupils achieve well and reach standards that are well above average overall by the end of Year 6. Standards in mathematics and science are particularly impressive, with the proportions of pupils attaining the higher levels in these subjects having risen consistently and progressively since the last inspection. By comparison, performance in English is not as good. Standards here are broadly average by the end of Year 6, but writing is a relative weakness: more able pupils in particular do not achieve as well as they should. The same disparity is seen in standards at the end of Key Stage 1, where performance in writing, although average, lags behind that in reading and mathematics. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. In a vibrant and stimulating environment they have lots of opportunities to engage in practical and play-based learning experiences that promote their good achievement in all areas. Children's personal, social and emotional development is a constant focus of attention, helping them to feel secure, enjoy learning and develop extremely good attitudes to school. This continues as pupils get older resulting in excellent standards of personal development. The school helps pupils to understand social, moral and cultural issues, pertinent to their own life experiences and wider world issues. Consequently, they are keen to help those less fortunate than themselves and are well aware of the choices that need to be made to live a healthy lifestyle and keep safe. Together with the generally good development of pupils' basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT) and safe use of the Internet, the school prepares pupils very well for their future. The good teaching and learning that occurs is built on the friendly but firm relationships engendered by teachers. Teachers' secure subject knowledge is also utilized well in planning exciting activities and matching these effectively to pupils' needs. The recent move to a more creative curriculum has been a big hit with pupils, particularly at Key Stage 2, who commented how much more interesting their work had become, including homework. Teachers ensure that pupils are fully involved in their learning and have good guidance on how to improve. The school is led and managed well. Improvement against all of the recommendations made by the last inspection has been impressive and the drive to improve in other areas is ongoing. This is a school that is willing to take risks and develop innovative practice to benefit pupils: for instance, the highly constructive morning meetings where pupils share news and discuss and reflect upon their learning and personal development. Pupils also benefit from the good links established with other schools, specialist agencies and parents. A committed and knowledgeable leadership team is constantly involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work. This ensures that the right priorities for improvement are identified and backed

up by energetic and well-focused action to improve things. However, until recently, systems to measure the impact of improvement initiatives were not sharp. Consequently, the school was unclear why the strategies they had been implementing to raise standards in writing were not paying off. Improvements to these systems mean that self-evaluation is now good, if a little modest on occasions, resulting in the school having good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in writing, particularly for more able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children begin Reception with average skills overall and leave Year 6 with standards that are generally well above average. Progress in the Foundation Stage is good, especially in personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave the Reception classes most are working securely at the expected levels in all areas, although skills in linking sounds and letters and early writing are not quite as good as in other areas. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics reaching above average standards by Year 2. Progress in writing is satisfactory, resulting in average standards by the end of Year 2. During Key Stage 2, pupils generally build well on their earlier learning. This is especially evident in mathematics and science where high proportions of pupils attain the higher levels. Progress in English is satisfactory overall, but too few pupils reach the higher level in writing. Good standards of work were seen in ICT, physical education and design technology. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at the same good rate as others. Those at an early stage of learning English also make good progress in acquiring skills in this area and generally do as well as their classmates in national tests. Over time, there are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. However, the school carefully analyses performance by gender and is vigilant in monitoring and tracking any differences that may be found from year to year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' immense enjoyment of school is clearly reflected in their good attendance and excellent behaviour and application in lessons. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This stems from the excellent provision made by the school to turn out well-rounded young citizens by Year 6. Innovative approaches, through art, history and, for example, using excerpts from the film *Shrek*, appeal to pupils and help them develop empathy with people who may be victimised because of their differences. This was evident in pupils' very good understanding of social issues, such as prejudice and racial intolerance. Excellent behaviour contributes significantly to pupils' learning and very good relationships. Maturity and good skills for the future develop well in group work and, for example, in school council activities,

where pupils say, 'We are here to give a voice to everyone.' Pupils are very keen to hold responsibilities and take these seriously. The work of the playground PALS is a great success, with pupils saying that they feel very confident to turn to these to help sort out any concerns. A notable aspect of pupils' personal development is the growing ownership they have over their learning, which is promoted very well through teaching.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Well-planned lessons ensure tasks are matched well to pupils' needs so that all are challenged and achieve success. Planning is also reflecting recent revisions to the curriculum so that tasks really 'fire pupils up' to learn. This was evident in particularly good examples of science fiction-style writing linked to a topic on Space. Teachers ensure that pupils are well aware of what they will be learning in every lesson. Moreover, at regular intervals, pupils are fully involved in the process of assessing how well they are doing. They certainly appreciate this. As one explained, 'In other schools teachers don't explain properly how well you've done, but here they do so you can fix things.' Teachers' secure subject knowledge is clearly evident in their detailed explanations to pupils and good demonstrations, including effective use of electronic white boards. Occasionally they talk for a little too long, so that interest wanes slightly because pupils are keen to get going with their work. Teaching assistants make a useful contribution, for instance by supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or providing additional support for pupils learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. The recent move to a more creative curriculum has boosted pupils' enthusiasm for learning, especially at Key Stage 2. Here pupils commented how much more interesting their work had become, including homework. One explained, 'I've never really liked maths but now I think it's really good. We play fun games instead of boring stuff.' The school is working hard on its revisions to the curriculum to ensure that meaningful learning links between subjects become embedded. Overall, enrichment is outstanding. Pupils receive specialist provision for ICT, gymnastics and modern foreign languages from the school's own staff. Very good use is also made of the resources offered by the nearby high school, for instance to support design and technology and sport. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and well-chosen visits and visitors enhance learning. 'We don't just go on trips', explained one pupil, 'teachers find really good ones so that they are fun.' Provision for personal, social and health education is of a high quality so pupils learn to understand and appreciate the world in which they live. The good curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage ensures that they have ample opportunities to use all their senses to learn through exploration and play.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is highly successful in meeting its mission and ensuring that the principles of Every Child Matters are embedded in all its work. Pastoral support is strong. Pupils are educated about how to live healthily and keep safe. Very good support systems, such as the morning meetings, give teachers a privileged insight to pupils' lives, helping them understand how best to support them with their learning and in dealing with life's ups and downs. Additional, specialist, support is provided when needed, to help pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties, physical disabilities or language needs. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully in place. Academic guidance is very good. Assessment procedures have recently been improved and are now rigorous in guiding the setting of challenging school targets. Pupils know their individual targets, which are well matched to their needs. Pupils are constantly involved in assessing how well they are learning and so have a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. The school provides good support for parents, for example workshops on the new homework provision.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Ensuring that pupils learn effectively and develop into well-rounded individuals is at the heart of the school's work. The headteacher is well supported by the two deputy headteachers and team leaders, who bring a good range of expertise to help lead and manage the school. The role of subject and other coordinators in leading and monitoring improvements in their areas has improved since the last inspection. The school sees continuous self-evaluation, including seeking external moderation and evaluation of its work, as central to improvement. Frustration at the limited success of past initiatives to improve pupils' writing has resulted in a renewed vigour to tackle this issue. This is being supported well by clear strategies to monitor and measure the impact of new ideas and approaches, with accountability built in at all levels. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well, providing challenge to the school and holding it accountable for its performance.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit, especially chatting to you and watching you work and play together. We would like to share with you the main things that we found out.

We agree with you that Barrow Hall is a good school. We were particularly impressed with your outstanding behaviour and how hard you worked in lessons. In most areas of your work you achieve well and reach especially good standards in mathematics and science. However, in English, particularly writing, we know that you can do better, so we have asked your school to help you improve your standards in this area. You can help too by doing your best at all times. The changes your school is making to the curriculum will help, because these are making you much more enthusiastic about learning, including writing. It was really good to hear how much you are enjoying the new topic work. Indeed, we saw some good examples of writing inspired by this, such as the Edward Jenner diaries linked to your work in science and history.

Your school does much to make your learning enjoyable, for example, through a very good range of visits and activities outside of school. It also takes good care of you, helping you to understand how to keep healthy and stay safe. You have very good opportunities to be involved in your own learning, which allows you to gain a good idea of the things you do well and how you can improve. We feel that your school is doing good work in giving you the skills and understanding to deal with life outside school, both now and as you get older: for instance, you show a very mature awareness of the need to value and respect people's differences. You told us how much you like and respect your teachers, who do a good job in helping you learn. Your headteacher, other managers and the governors also work very hard to give you a good education. On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you all well for the future.