

Barrow Hall Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111234
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	337646
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Clarke

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	512
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Devers
Headteacher	Mr Geoff Bowles
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the data on pupils' performance, including their current progress, the school improvement plan, records of the school's monitoring of its performance and documents relating to safeguarding. The responses to 181 parents' questionnaires were considered, alongside responses from staff and pupils' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether pupils in Key Stage 2 are making sufficient progress especially in mathematics
- whether more-able pupils are making the progress they are capable of in writing
- the extent to which the quality of teaching is good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress through the school
- the extent to which the school is narrowing the gap between the achievements of boys and girls
- whether provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving the children's achievements?

Information about the school

Barrow Hall is larger than most primary schools and is situated on the outskirts of Warrington. The vast majority of pupils are of a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The school provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in three Reception classes.

The school has a number of awards, including Investors in People, Primary Quality Mark, Activemark, Artsmark and Healthy School's status. The school is working towards the information and communication technology (ICT) Beta Mark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Barrow Hall is a good school. It serves its community well. It is a forward thinking school which embraces new initiatives effectively. The well respected headteacher, senior leaders and governors are not complacent as they strive to improve all the school provides for the pupils. For example, all pupils in Years 5 and 6 have their own electronic notebooks which link to the internet and enable them to complete projects and carry out research at home. Pupils gain a good understanding of the benefits of ICT and how it can be used effectively to support their learning.

Pupils make good progress from broadly average starting points to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. The school has been successful in improving pupils' writing skills, especially for the more able, since the last inspection through a series of well planned strategies which have increased pupils' motivation to write. Attainment and progress in mathematics has lagged a little behind but a recent emphasis on improving mental skills and calculation is paying off. Current work shows above average standards throughout the school with pupils making good progress. The school has a very detailed system for monitoring pupils' progress and keeps a close track of all pupils in the school. Any underperformance is quickly spotted. For example, the school is taking effective action to get a small group of girls back on track.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are thoughtful, kind and consider how their actions affect themselves and the feelings of others. By the end of Year 6, pupils develop into confident and mature young citizens. Pupils' attendance is high and reflects pupils' enjoyment of school. Teaching is good overall, but varies in quality throughout the school. In some lessons, work is not always matched to pupils' needs and abilities and this slows their progress. Pupils behave well in lessons and work hard. This is especially so for the older pupils in Key Stage 2 where often behaviour is exemplary. There are some very good examples of teachers' marking which clearly shows pupils exactly how to improve their work, but this practice is inconsistent throughout the school. Occasionally teachers forget to remind pupils about the quality and quantity of work they expect from them and then the pace of learning slows.

The curriculum is good and caters for the pupils needs well. Pupils are engaged with the topics they learn and are presently immersed in the countries they are studying. These give the pupils a taste of other cultures, ways of life and beliefs which in turn helps them to celebrate differences. The provision for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress and become totally engrossed in the exciting learning activities which are set out for them in the vibrant indoor learning environment. Children have access to outdoor learning, but this is limited and

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the provision does not match the same high standard as that seen indoors.

The leadership in this large school is carefully structured with roles and responsibilities clearly understood by leaders at all levels. Team leaders are having greater influence on school improvement and all staff are increasingly accountable for pupils' performance. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. Systems for monitoring the work of the school are rigorous, but do not always focus sharply enough on exactly how different groups of pupils are progressing in lessons. The school has maintained the good performance identified at its last inspection and demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress further by:
 - ensuring that work set in all lessons always matches pupils' needs
 - ensuring that teachers' marking consistently tells pupils how to improve their work
 - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching in lessons focuses more sharply on the learning outcomes for all groups of pupils
 - ensuring that pupils always know exactly what is expected of them in lessons particularly during independent activities in respect of quantity and quality of work.
- Ensure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have more opportunities to learn outdoors with exciting, stimulating learning activities to match those found indoors.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils behave well in and around school. They are attentive during lessons and particularly enjoy sessions where they discuss what they are learning with their learning partners or with groups of pupils. Even the youngest children are keen to learn and enjoy the tasks set for them. Pupils try hard in lessons and this contributes to the good progress they make. They work well on their independent activities and try hard, but occasionally do not do as well as they could when teachers do not set clear expectations of the quality and quantity of work required. Sometimes, because of the open plan nature of the school, lessons in neighbouring classes affect the ability of the pupils in the next class to concentrate. For older pupils their concentration and diligence in lessons is commendable. With good support from teaching assistants, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities show very positive attitudes to their work and make good progress. They know they will get the help they need to succeed.

In 2009, attainment at the end of Year 6 dipped from the above average position seen in previous years to broadly average. Even so, this represented good progress for these pupils. School data and inspection evidence shows that the attainment of current Year 6 pupils is again above average in English, mathematics and science. Mental mathematics

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has been a recent priority with a whole-school focus on improving pupils' skills in this area. Good teaching together with detailed assessments have allowed teachers to target their lessons precisely to enable the pupils to succeed. Attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2 has risen since the last inspection and is significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This reflects good progress from their starting points.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and recognise the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. The wide range of sporting activities provided by the school and the neighbouring high school has a positive impact on pupils' lifestyles. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and seek to warn others of potential dangers, for example, by giving information in assemblies on how to keep safe when on the beach.

Attendance is high, and persistent absence has nearly been eliminated. Pupils use their ICT skills well in a range of subjects and this is preparing them effectively for their future economic well-being. Speaking and listening skills are also strong and a consistent feature of lessons involves pupils explaining their reasoning. Together with good basic skills, this is good preparation for their future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good. Where it is particularly effective, lessons proceed at a good pace and teachers use a range of strategies to keep the pupils on task. Teachers have high expectations and provide appropriate challenge for all pupils. The focus throughout the school on improving writing skills for the more able was particularly successful in raising the achievements of this group of pupils. Teaching assistants provide effective support for individuals and small groups. Teachers are adept at monitoring pupils' progress and revisiting work to recap and consolidate learning in order to give greater clarity to new concepts and learning. Assessments are effective and used well to support learning. Often pupils are asked to assess how they have got on with their lessons and this quick method of assessment gives the teacher an instant view of how well the pupils have understood the concepts taught. In less successful lessons, tasks are not always appropriate for all pupils, and questions do not always require higher level thinking and result in insufficient challenge for some. Some marking is particularly good and helps pupils improve their writing, but marking does not always identify the next steps in learning to help pupils improve their work.

The curriculum is good. It is appropriately matched to pupils' needs. The focus on improving mental mathematics has been effective in addressing a relative weakness in pupils' performance. The curriculum is creative and allows many opportunities for sports and enrichment, for example, through modern foreign languages. Residential visits give the pupils many opportunities to experience learning in different contexts.

Good care is taken of the pupils and the support and guidance they are given is valuable. Vulnerable pupils and those who need additional support are well provided for and the school provides sensitive and constructive help to enable pupils to overcome any difficulties they may have. Transition arrangements with the local high school are very effective and provide pupils with a secure familiarisation process to reduce the adverse effects of transfer. Similarly, transfer into the Reception Year is effectively managed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, senior leaders and team leaders together demonstrate a clear direction and vision for the school in the future. The school is forward looking and this is

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apparent in the way that it has embraced improvements in ICT, including the rapidly increasing number of pupils with access to a virtual learning environment. Team leaders are responsible for their teams and are answerable to the senior leaders and to the headteacher. Delegation of responsibility is strong and drives improvement. Target setting is rigorous, as is tracking of individual pupil's performance. The rigour of the school's tracking system means that underperformance is swiftly identified and quickly eradicated. Consequently, the school ensures good equality of opportunity as it seeks to eliminate any underperformance by different groups of pupils. The school is particularly successful in ensuring that those who are vulnerable are well supported. Less well developed is the sharpness with which new initiatives are tracked and their impact on different groups of pupils evaluated and measured. Teaching is monitored, weaknesses identified and plans are formulated to improve teachers' performance. Performance management increasingly holds teachers to account.

The governing body provide good support and challenge for the school. They manage school funds prudently. The governors discharge their statutory responsibilities and ensure that pupils are safe. Safeguarding procedures are good with all child protection and risk assessments in place.

The school has a community cohesion policy. The school is effective in ensuring that the school community works and plays together well and that its place in the wider community is assured. Pupils have many opportunities to work alongside pupils from the high school and also learn about many different cultures, languages and beliefs.

Parents are increasingly involved with their children's learning through the school's investment in a virtual learning environment and electronic notebooks. Workshops also provide parents with useful information on how to help their children. The parents' homework committee gives specific input into topic-based homework.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The learning environment indoors for the children in the Reception classes is vibrant and exciting. The range of interesting activities provided across the three bases is carefully thought out to engage, intrigue and to invite investigation and enjoyment. Children gain good independence, behave well and soon settle to their chosen activities. They are highly engaged by resources which are easily accessible and are of good quality. All activities are designed to give high priority to developing language and mathematical skills. Questions from adults encourage the children to think and extend their learning. Children work very well together to improve the models they have made or recount a traditional tale through role play. Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. There is a good mix of child-initiated and adult-led tasks. Activities bring a relevance to learning. For example, in the 'shoe shop' children investigated the size and shape of different shoes and learned how to measure their feet. The outdoor area is underdeveloped and underused. The school has plans to remedy this situation. Staff promote good safe routines and the children respond well to the good care and help they are given. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and promotes good team work. On-going assessment is clear and used well to plan next steps in learning. Children's work and ideas are effectively built in to planning different activities.

When the children start in Reception their skills are broadly at the levels expected for children of their age, but weaker in linking sounds and letters, writing and calculation. Children make good progress and by the end of Reception are reaching average standards. They make particularly good progress in aspects of their personal and social development and calculation skills. The recently introduced sessions to help children recognise letters and sounds are well planned to promote children's language skills effectively. Children come from a wide range of pre-school settings. Induction arrangements are effective in helping the children to settle well into school. Parents appreciate the sessions held to enable the children to become familiar with Reception classrooms and the opportunity parents have to contribute to the early assessments made.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

Parents are very supportive of the school. They say that their children enjoy school. They feel that the school keeps their children safe although a few expressed a number of concerns especially about the busy road outside the school. The road is also a concern of the governors. However, the recent traffic calming measures and the different start time for the local high school have eased the situation. All other issues were raised with the school. A number of parents felt the school did not support them to help their child with learning at home. The inspectors felt that the school makes good provision for assisting parents with their children's homework. On the whole, the majority of parents praise the school and its staff for the ways they help their children to enjoy school and learn.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barrow Hall Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 181 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 512 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	100	55	76	42	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	93	51	85	47	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	60	33	111	61	7	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	69	38	100	55	11	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	75	41	99	55	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	61	34	99	55	17	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	37	98	54	9	5	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	64	35	93	51	7	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	36	103	57	8	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	29	104	57	11	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	23	113	62	11	6	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	66	36	105	58	9	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	85	47	89	49	6	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 November 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Barrow Hall Community Primary School, Warrington, WA5 3AA

Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly when my colleagues and I inspected your school recently. Please thank your parents and carers for taking the time to fill in the parental questionnaires, we read them all. We enjoyed watching and listening to you in your lessons, reading your work and talking to you. We particularly enjoyed the Year 6 assembly about the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) and Grace Darling. We were impressed by how much the Year 6 had found out about the RNLI's good work.

We were impressed by how kind you are towards each other, whether in the classrooms or out in the playgrounds. We like the way you take responsibility and we think your behaviour is good. Indeed a lot of things in your school are good. For example:

- children get off to a good start in Reception
- teaching is good so you learn well in lessons
- attainment in English, mathematics and science is above average
- the teachers and teaching assistants take good care of you all
- the headteacher knows exactly what is needed to improve your school even further
- your attendance rates are very high which tells us you like coming to school.

As you can see you have much to be proud of. The inspectors and staff agree that to improve even further the school should:

- ensure that you make the best possible progress, for example, by making sure that when teachers mark your work they always gives you good guidance on how to improve
- ensure that the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have more opportunities to learn outdoors and have exciting, stimulating learning activities to match those indoors.

Keep working hard, keep yourselves safe and enjoy your time in school.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Judith Clarke

Lead inspector

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