

Inspection of a good school: The Barlow RC High School and Specialist Science College

Parrs Wood Road, East Didsbury, Manchester M20 6BX

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 June 2024

Outcome

The Barlow RC High School and Specialist Science College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school where pupils' differences are celebrated. Pupils and staff are accepting of everyone. Parents and carers said that the school is a family where there are lots of opportunities for their children to grow.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. Most pupils learn effectively from a broad, rich curriculum. This ensures that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), typically achieve well.

Relationships between pupils and staff are courteous and respectful. There is a purposeful atmosphere around school. Pupils know the expectations placed on them to work hard and to do their best in lessons. They respond positively to these expectations. Pupils feel happy and safe.

Pupils' wider development is a high priority for the school. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills as prefects and diversity leaders. Older pupils provide support for younger readers. Pupils benefit from an extensive and varied extra-curricular programme. For example, pupils regularly take part in activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, drama, music and sports clubs. Many pupils visit universities, museums and theatres. Pupils enjoy visits to Italy, Iceland and France.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has made considerable staffing changes since the previous inspection. These include changes to leadership, and pastoral and SEND staffing to better support pupils' increasingly diverse needs. Leaders at all levels, including the governing body, have an accurate knowledge about what the school is doing well and the areas for improvement.

The school has successfully fostered a culture of high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour.

The school has implemented a curriculum that makes clear what pupils need to learn and remember. In most subjects, pupils improve their knowledge in a well-ordered way, building on what they already know.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge across all subjects. They use their expertise to encourage pupils to make connections in their learning. For example, in English, pupils learn from historical speakers, such as Martin Luther King, in preparation for delivering their own presentations. In mathematics, pupils are challenged to apply their learning to more sophisticated problem-solving.

Teachers' approaches to assessment are increasingly effective in checking pupils' understanding. Typically, teachers use assessment information well to address misconceptions so that pupils are ready for new learning. However, on occasion, some teachers do not make sure that pupils have secured the important knowledge that they need before introducing new information. This results in some pupils developing gaps in their learning, which hinders their achievement.

The school quickly identifies pupils' additional needs, including SEND. Teachers use the information that they are provided with about individual pupils so that they can make appropriate adjustments to their curriculum delivery. Leaders ensure that all pupils access the same ambitious curriculum. When needed, such as in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), the curriculum is carefully tailored to meet pupils' specific needs.

Reading is a high priority. The school makes sure that pupils who struggle to read are quickly identified and receive extra support. This helps them to strengthen their reading knowledge. It also promotes their enjoyment of reading. The school has invested heavily in its well-thought-through reading strategy. Pupils have regular access to high-quality books and reading materials. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to read across the school day, for example during form time, in lessons and in the library, which is a well-used facility.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is highly positive. Routines to support good behaviour are clear and applied consistently well by staff. The school ensures that pupils' attendance continues to improve.

The school has put in place an extensive programme to support pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about online safety, their physical and mental health and what it means to have healthy relationships. Pupils have a good knowledge of life in modern-day Britain, including fundamental British values such as democracy and the rule of law. They receive comprehensive careers information and guidance. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education and their lives beyond school.

The school takes account of the workload and well-being of all staff, for example by ensuring that its approaches to the use of assessment are not onerous.

The governing body has a thorough understanding of the strengths and priorities of the school. It provides appropriate support and challenge to support the school's continued improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not identify or address the gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly enough. This means that pupils' learning is not as secure as it should be. This hampers their progress through the curriculum and their overall achievement. The school should ensure that teachers are well equipped to use assessment information to resolve gaps in pupils' knowledge so they learn and remember all that they should.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	105581
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10347969
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	909
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Cathryn Baggaley
Headteacher	Claire Wallace
Website	www.thebarlowrchigh.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the school was last inspected. There have also been several changes to other leadership roles in the school.
- The school uses five registered and two unregistered alternative education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 16 pupils from Years 7 to 11 with autism.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders.
- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, carried out lesson visits, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also met with the subject leader for science to discuss the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the views of staff by speaking with them and reviewing the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors considered the responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and took account of their responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Gary Kelly, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Steven Caldecott

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024