

Barrow CofE Primary School

Address: Barrow, School Lane, Great Barrow, Chester, Cheshire, CH3 7HW

Unique reference number (URN): 111270

Inspection report: 24 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	    
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards not met

Leaders, including governors, have not maintained an open and positive culture of safeguarding. They have not reviewed safeguarding practices to ensure that they are effective. This has led to some significant weaknesses in how well pupils are kept safe. Leaders do not have a suitable oversight of their systems. For example, they have not ensured that safeguarding records are accurate, or detailed enough to be useful.

Staff know pupils well and can identify the signs of potential harm. However, staff do not always pass on their concerns to the appropriate people. This inconsistent practice means that leaders do not take action when it is needed, for example by making referrals to other professionals. Furthermore, leaders' follow-up actions sometimes do not ensure that pupils have their voices heard. As a result, some pupils do not get the help they need and continue to be at risk of significant harm.

Governors have not fully understood their legal duties to keep pupils safe. As a result, they do not have enough oversight of how effectively the school safeguards its pupils. Leaders, staff and governors lack detailed safeguarding knowledge. They do not benefit from the kind of training which would sharpen their understanding of how to keep pupils safe.

Staff teach pupils how to keep safe, including online. Pupils know how to raise concerns. They know that there is pastoral support available if they are worried or anxious.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

This school requires special measures

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **special measures** because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Strong standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The school's comprehensive personal development programme is underpinned by a carefully designed curriculum that is closely matched to pupils' needs and aspirations. Pupils

benefit from a range of clubs, including choir, yoga and gymnastics, which develop their talents beyond the classroom. Where they have a specialist interest, pupils create their own clubs and projects. They raise awareness for causes that they are passionate about, such as endangered animals. Whole-school trips, including to museums and art galleries, deepen pupils' cultural understanding. The personal development programme enables pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, to be very well prepared to take advantage of all that life in modern Britain offers.

Pupils reflect on important messages about fundamental British values, such as democracy and individual freedom. Pupils experience these values in the work they do across school, for example voting for class rewards and choosing pupils to represent them in leadership roles. Pupils benefit from holding positions such as 'wellbeing warriors', school councillors and safety officers. They drive changes in their school and community, and value the opportunity to have their voices heard. As a result, pupils develop a sense of responsibility and become increasingly confident. They build resilience in their outdoor learning sessions and they cooperate very well with each other through these shared experiences.

The relationships and sex education and health education curriculums are taught well, in an age-appropriate way. Pupils are respectful and reflective when discussing diversity, fairness and the differences between people. Scenario-based learning and lessons further strengthen pupils' understanding about staying safe, including when accessing the internet and building healthy relationships.

Staff have a deep understanding of their pupils' needs and provide pastoral support that is highly effective. Pupils develop a range of strategies for managing their feelings, which they use to resolve conflicts. As a result, they consistently behave with integrity, mirroring the school's values.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils typically attain in line with their peers nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage two. Published results show that pupils' attainment in 2025 dipped below the national average. However, this does not represent how well pupils typically achieve across the school. They generally produce high-quality written work and successfully remember what they have learned before. This helps pupils to speak with confidence about their knowledge and understanding of a variety of different topics that they have studied. Overall, pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education.

Pupils learn to read quickly and this is reflected in the majority of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1. Pupils have not achieved as well in recent times in the multiplication check in Year 4. However, pupils catch up quickly by the end of Year 6 and they are able to access more mathematical knowledge as they move through key stage two.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Staff check pupils' attendance daily. They recognise when pupils may need support to attend school more regularly, including those who are disadvantaged or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults work closely with families to reduce any barriers that could lead to pupils missing school. Supportive strategies, such as the breakfast club, help pupils to feel settled and eager to attend. This has successfully improved some pupils' attendance to school. Pupils, including those with SEND, typically attend in line with the national average.

Pupils behave well and represent the school with pride. They are polite, kind and show respect to adults and to one another. Staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils consistently meet these expectations. They understand and follow clear routines and rules. Older pupils take pride in acting as role models to their younger peers as 'buddies', especially during social times. This contributes to a calm and welcoming environment across the school. In classrooms, pupils settle quickly into lessons and focus on learning without distraction. Bullying is rare. Staff deal with any unkind behaviour quickly and sensitively. They are mindful of when pupils' SEND might affect their behaviour. Pupils develop positive attitudes, engage fully with their learning and show self-discipline and consideration for others.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

With the help of external support, the school has established a well-organised and ambitious curriculum. Teachers are clear about what should be taught and when. The curriculum is tailored appropriately to the needs of pupils in mixed-aged classes. Leaders draw on specialist external advice to check the quality of the curriculum and how well it is taught.

There is a sharp focus on pupils learning to read and write quickly. Staff teach phonics with accuracy and clarity. Pupils secure their knowledge of letter sounds quickly, which helps them to read and write with confidence. They learn basic number facts that support mathematical understanding. However, opportunities to develop these numeracy skills with fluency is not equally effective across year groups.

Teachers have the knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum with confidence. They present new learning clearly. Teachers use their checks on what pupils know to adapt lessons so that pupils can understand and remember what they learn. Teachers make sure that pupils revisit important information. They provide extra practice for pupils who have gaps in their knowledge. Teachers also make helpful changes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they can experience the same success as their classmates.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children display high levels of confidence. They develop warm relationships with staff, who make them feel secure and valued. Children settle quickly and purposefully to their learning. They ask questions and explore their environment with curiosity. Through the well-considered activities available to them, children play and learn well alongside their friends.

Well-established routines help children to eagerly join in with phonics lessons. They are attentive and keen to learn to read and write. Children swiftly develop the skills that they need to be ready for Year 1.

The curriculum is well thought out. It takes account of children's interests and the skills they need to master. Staff provide thoughtful opportunities for pupils to build on their learning through play. They engage children in interesting conversations to extend their vocabulary and develop language skills. Staff regularly check on children's learning to spot and address any gaps in understanding.

Children learn routines, build independence and enjoy putting their name on the 'proud cloud' when they are recognised for working hard. They learn strategies to support their emotions and confidently express their feelings in the class 'calm corner'. Staff work closely with parents and carers, especially for those children who face difficulties in their learning or wellbeing. This supports children to feel fully included.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have established effective systems to quickly and accurately identify pupils' individual needs. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This begins in the early years. Children in the Reception class receive effective support, which reduces any barriers to their learning. Leaders prioritise building relationships with families and external professionals to help staff understand how to support each pupil effectively. Families feel listened to and supported. This strengthens the partnership between home and school and helps pupils to develop their sense of belonging.

Leaders ensure that staff receive training which develops their knowledge of how to support pupils. Staff have a secure understanding of pupils' needs. They use a range of strategies to support inclusion and create consistent classroom routines, which enables pupils with SEND to learn alongside their peers.

Leaders use additional funding to provide specific support for disadvantaged pupils. For example, providing additional music tuition so that disadvantaged pupils have access to the same wider opportunities that they might not otherwise have. Staff understand the strategies that have been designed to help disadvantaged pupils. They implement these approaches well.

Urgent improvement

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement 

Governors and leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the school's performance or how they can continue to improve it. Although there have been some recent improvements, these have depended on support from beyond the school, including from the local authority. Neither leaders nor governors have the necessary knowledge and skills to enact change without the support of these external partners.

Governors do not understand, or carry out effectively, their responsibilities under the law. Governors' checks on the school's work lack rigour. They do not assure themselves of the quality of leaders' work, including whether the school complies with its legal duties. Over time, governors have not reviewed important information, such as safeguarding incidents or pupils' achievement, with precision. They do not challenge leaders' actions to address areas where pupils may be underachieving, or to secure the safety and welfare of pupils. This has led to pupils being at risk of potential harm. Leaders, including governors, do not demonstrate the capacity or expertise to rectify the serious weaknesses in safeguarding practice, or to oversee school improvement without additional support.

Nevertheless, many aspects of the school are effective despite these failings of oversight, especially pupils' personal development and wellbeing. In addition, the professional learning programme is well considered and valued by staff. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and value the support that their children receive. Leaders remain attentive to staff's wellbeing, ensuring that workload is manageable. As a result, staff feel motivated and proud to work at the school.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Weaknesses in safeguarding procedures mean that pupils are not consistently kept safe at this school. When pupils turn to adults that they trust to share their worries, staff do not routinely pass on these concerns to leaders. Leaders do not act quickly enough. At times, this means that some pupils do not receive the support that they need in a timely manner. Even though pupils are happy, attend regularly and describe a great sense of security at school, leaders and staff do not fulfil their duties to protect them.

Leaders and governors have relied heavily on external support to bring about improvements at the school. This means that, despite many aspects of the school performing well, leaders do not have the capacity to tackle ongoing school development successfully enough.

Pupils now access a curriculum that is ambitious. Pupils rise to leaders' and teachers' strengthened expectations for their learning. Typically, pupils achieve well and are ready for their next stage of education.

Pupils are proud to grow and learn in this small village school that they consider a family. They enjoy school and are motivated to learn. Warm and respectful relationships between staff and pupils contribute to a positive and nurturing atmosphere. Mostly, staff know pupils' needs well. For disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, this ensures that they have their barriers to learning and wellbeing reduced so they can also flourish in their learning.

Pupils, including children in the early years, learn in calm and purposeful classrooms. They show genuine care, respect and consideration for one another. Playtimes are harmonious. Pupils take a collective responsibility to make everyone feel included. They know that adults in school promote positive behaviour and will protect them from bullying.

Pupils develop a strong sense of moral and social justice. They enjoy finding out about current affairs and engage in high-quality debates on issues that they feel strongly about.

Through community events and leadership roles, pupils learn to be active citizens. Pupils are well prepared for modern-day life beyond their school community.

Next steps

- Leaders must ensure that staff have secure knowledge of how to keep pupils safe and that they consistently follow the school's policy for reporting safeguarding concerns.
 - Leaders must ensure that they take timely action to respond to safeguarding concerns, including by making referrals to other agencies, and record these actions promptly and accurately.
 - Governors must ensure that they fully understand and fulfil their statutory responsibilities so that have a robust oversight of the school's work. This includes ensuring that policies, systems and processes for safeguarding are effectively and continually reviewed.
 - Governors must ensure that they build leadership capacity and provide effective support and challenge to leaders. This is in order to reduce the school's reliance on external support to drive school development work.
 - Leaders should develop the school's approach to mathematics in key stage 1 in order to ensure that pupils secure number fluency before they reach key stage 2.
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About this inspection

The school is part of a federation with another primary school. The chair of the board of governors for both schools is Julia Tillotson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the acting executive headteacher, acting head of school, other leaders and staff.

An inspector spoke with a group of governors from the federation, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Chester.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Christian religious character. Its last section 48 inspection took place in March 2018.

The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

At the time of inspection, there was an acting executive headteacher and acting head of school in post.

Headteacher: Paul Hudson

Lead inspector:

Emily Morris, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Schelene Ferris, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 24 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

51

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

98

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

21.57%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

5.88%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.80%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	56%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	33%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	61%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	74%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	50%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	72%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	56%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	33%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	73%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	S	46%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	S	62%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	S	59%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	S	60%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	S	68%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	S	80%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	S	78%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	S	80%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.4%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.0%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	9.4%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	16.3%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.5%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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