

Barrowford School

Address: Rushton Street, Barrowford, Barrowford Primary School, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 6EA

Unique reference number (URN): 119166

Inspection report: 21 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

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.

Expected standard

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Many pupils join the school with complex needs. The school nurtures each pupil individually by providing a safe and inclusive environment. Leaders and staff work with families to identify and understand pupils' needs and decide what support is required. Staff work closely with specialist teachers and social care partners so that support is tailored to individual pupils. Leaders identify pupils facing other barriers to their learning or wellbeing and put appropriate support in place.

The special educational needs (SEN) unit offers pupils a carefully structured pathway. As a result of this support, some pupils move back into mainstream classes. The special educational needs coordinator works closely with the virtual school so that children in care receive coordinated support. A small number of pupils access alternative provision through a tutoring service, which secures continued education for these pupils.

Across the school, staff typically apply effective strategies that help pupils to regulate their emotions, settle and engage with learning. Teachers check pupils' progress and plan what they need next. Leaders use the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils well. These pupils perform closer to national averages than pupils at the school overall.

Adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are carefully planned in the SEN unit. This is not consistently the case for pupils with SEND in mainstream classes.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development programme is clearly structured and helps pupils develop the values and confidence they need in life. The curriculum promotes dignity, respect and the rights of the child. The school has received an award for its work in this aspect of the curriculum.

Pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values and show tolerance and respect. They demonstrate care towards classmates from different backgrounds and those with additional needs. However, pupils' knowledge of world religions is less secure. Pupils reflect on their beliefs and discuss ethical issues through a weekly big question session at lunchtimes. They take on responsibilities as ambassadors for rights and members of the school council.

The school's curriculum for relationships and health education helps pupils understand healthy lifestyles and how to build safe and trusting relationships. As a result, pupils recognise risks online and offline and know how to keep themselves safe. Leaders consult parents and carers on the content of sex education and inform them before teaching.

Pupils who need additional support with their wellbeing have access to a therapist, therapeutic sessions and quiet spaces. When they are anxious or not coping with their emotions, they know staff will listen and that they have somewhere calm to go. A

bereavement curriculum supports pupils through loss from the early years to Year 6. This gives them the language to talk about difficult experiences.

Pupils broaden their horizons through residential and cultural visits, such as to the Hallé orchestra and the Eden Project. The school choir performs at national events. Clubs, including sport, art and homework support, are open to all pupils and help them develop new interests.

Leaders remove financial and social barriers to the wider school offer, so that disadvantaged pupils and pupils in the specialist provision take part alongside their peers.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Published results at the end of key stage 2 are below the national average. This includes the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils leave the school less prepared for secondary school than they should be.

Current pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills. Pupils do not routinely address mistakes in spelling or handwriting. As a result, they do not secure the foundations they need to communicate their knowledge with accuracy.

Pupils' achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been significantly below the national average for 3 consecutive years. This is despite staff teaching the phonics programme consistently. Pupils' weaker foundations in phonics affect how they access the wider curriculum.

Pupils join the school at different points in the year, and many have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND make progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is close to that of disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Pupils' attendance rates have been below national averages for 3 years. This includes pupils who face additional barriers to learning, such as those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Consequently, too many pupils miss important learning and opportunities. Leaders have recently employed an attendance officer and are working with external partners to improve attendance. This work is at an early stage. Attendance for pupils who face the greatest barriers has not improved.

Staff build positive relationships with pupils and support them to take responsibility for their own conduct. They help pupils to manage themselves in lessons and around the school. Most staff speak positively about this approach. Staff have received training to apply it consistently. This includes training for situations where pupils need more intensive support to manage their behaviour. Staff make appropriate adjustments to support pupils with SEND. In some classrooms, pupils are calm and focused on their learning. In others, some

pupils interrupt lessons. Staff do not always address this, so the learning of other pupils is disrupted. Pupils are taught about different types of bullying. Pupils say bullying and discrimination are rare and that staff deal with them when they happen.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The school's curriculum does not focus closely enough on the important knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils need to learn across subjects and in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers do not routinely adapt teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those who are higher attainers. Teaching does not consistently identify or address gaps and misconceptions in pupils' learning. Leaders recognise that the curriculum needs to improve to support all pupils to achieve well. Leaders have recently improved the curriculum and teaching in mathematics and made sure that important knowledge is clearly identified and sequenced. Pupils speak proudly about practical learning linked to their projects. For example, in Year 5, pupils started their Viking topic by mapping the base of a longship outside.

Staff teach the school's phonics programme effectively so that pupils learn sounds in the right order. Pupils practise reading from books matched to their stage, which helps them develop confidence. However, in pupils' written work, teachers do not consistently help pupils to correct errors in punctuation and spelling or to improve their handwriting. As a result, some pupils do not secure this knowledge or progress as they should.

Early years

Needs attention 

While the school's established routines help children settle well, the early years curriculum does not consistently help children to build their knowledge securely. It does not set out what children need to learn or how their skills develop over time. Some children do not make the progress they should. Overall, too many children are not ready for Year 1.

Staff talk with children, introduce new words and encourage them to share their ideas. When adults model vocabulary and repeat it clearly, children pick it up and use it. This is not the case across the whole setting. Children learn phonics, and adults address mistakes when they arise. Stories are read to children, and they have a space to choose and explore books. However, weaknesses in children's phonics knowledge are reflected in the Year 1 phonics screening check, which has been significantly below national averages for 3 years.

Children enjoy learning and engage well with activities. They develop their personal and social skills and grow in confidence in familiar surroundings. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate support. Staff work closely with parents, carers and pre-school settings so that children's needs are known from the moment they arrive.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Some of leaders' recent improvements to the curriculum and teaching have not had an impact on pupils' learning, particularly in writing. Leaders understand the areas the school

needs to improve, including the wider curriculum, adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in mainstream classes, and pupils' achievement in writing. However, their actions have not consistently translated into the improvement that pupils need.

Governors meet their statutory duties and have developed their own expertise so that they can ask the right questions of leaders. Leaders and governors take decisions in the best interests of pupils, including those who face additional barriers to learning. They engage positively with parents and the community. Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, their challenge does not currently move the school's work forward at the pace required.

Leaders consider staff workload and wellbeing when they make decisions about the school's work. Teachers describe this as giving them the time to focus on their teaching. Leaders protect time for staff, including early career teachers, to access professional learning. Teachers value these opportunities. The impact of this work is more evident in the specialist provision, where staff expertise supports pupils to make progress. Training on adapting the delivery of the mainstream curriculum for pupils with SEND is at an earlier stage. This contributes to the inconsistency in what pupils experience across the school.

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

Pupils arrive at Barrowford School ready to be welcomed warmly. Staff know families well and work to understand each child from the start. The school welcomes every child. Pupils who have had difficult experiences at previous settings find a home here. Pupils with additional needs access a specialist pathway to support their progress. Pupils feel a sense of belonging. The school's work is grounded in respect for the rights of the child.

Pupils feel safe. They know trusted adults will listen to them when they have a worry. Bullying is dealt with quickly. The curriculum teaches pupils to recognise risks online and offline. When pupils need additional support with their wellbeing, the school provides trained adults and quiet spaces to help them.

Pupils broaden their experience of the world through residential trips, visits to galleries and orchestras and singing events. They take on responsibilities as rights ambassadors, members of the school council and speakers at public events. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour across the school is variable. In some classrooms, pupils are calm and focused. In others, some pupils interrupt learning, and this is not addressed promptly. Too many pupils are not in school often enough. These pupils miss out on the learning and experiences that the school offers.

Pupils are willing and capable learners. However, they do not achieve the outcomes they should. Children in the early years are not sufficiently prepared for Year 1. Results in national tests at the end of pupils' primary education have been significantly below national averages for 3 years. Pupils do not consistently secure the knowledge and skills they need

as they move through the school. Those pupils capable of more find their learning does not stretch them.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure the curriculum is clearly sequenced and consistently taught well so that pupils build knowledge and skills over time.
 - Leaders should map knowledge and skills progressively across all 7 areas of learning in the early years so that staff have a shared picture of what children should learn day to day and over time.
 - Leaders should continue to develop staff expertise in adapting the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream classrooms so that all pupils receive the same quality of provision.
 - Leaders should improve pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, ensuring that all pupils make the progress their starting points allow.
 - Leaders should ensure their attendance improvement work reaches all groups of pupils so that the 3-year decline in attendance and persistent absence begin to reverse.
 - Leaders should ensure the school's approach to behaviour is applied consistently so that all pupils experience clear expectations and any disruption to learning is addressed promptly.
 - Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and outcomes across all phases and that support and challenge secures improvement at pace.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Phil Heyworth.

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

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 headteacher and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority. She also spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.

Inspectors visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at curriculum information and pupils' work. They reviewed school documentation, including the following: the school self-evaluation document, the school development plan, external quality assurance visit records, and governing body meeting minutes records.

There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils. However, inspectors sought their views in person through various activities. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

The school includes 2 special educational needs units with provision for 16 pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and 16 pupils with speech, language and communication needs.

Headteacher : Rachel Tomlinson

Lead inspector:

Dianne Holcroft, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Debbie Withey, Ofsted Inspector

Julie Stevens, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

327

Close to 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

420

Above 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)

41.59%

Above 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

15.60%

Well 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

18.96%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Below 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)

SEN unit

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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	46%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	38%	60%	Below

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	68%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	72%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	72%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	60%	73%	Below

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	48%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	51%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	43%	71%	Below

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	60%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	60%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	63%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	57%	73%	Below

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	37%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	43%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	43%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	18%	44%	Below

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	66%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	70%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	69%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	60%	Close to average

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	39%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	43%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	46%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	23%	58%	Below

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	51%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	53%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	54%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	41%	59%	Below

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	37%	68%	-31 pp
2024/25 (revised)	43%	69%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	43%	67%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	18%	66%	-48 pp

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	66%	80%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	70%	81%	-11 pp
2023/24 (final)	69%	80%	-11 pp
2022/23 (final)	55%	78%	-24 pp

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	39%	78%	-39 pp
2024/25 (revised)	43%	78%	-35 pp
2023/24 (final)	46%	78%	-32 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	23%	77%	-55 pp

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	51%	80%	-29 pp
2024/25 (revised)	53%	81%	-27 pp
2023/24 (final)	54%	79%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	41%	79%	-38 pp

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)	10.6%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	9.9%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	9.1%	5.9%	Above

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)	38.5%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	35.6%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	32.5%	16.2%	Above

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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