

English Martyrs Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110004
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	378031
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Sonja Joseph

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	373
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nicola Milsom-James
Headteacher	Mr Jamie Carroll
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 21 lessons taught by 13 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, and groups of pupils and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including development planning, self-evaluation records, policies and performance data. Questionnaires from 90 parents and carers, 15 staff and 104 pupils were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress made by all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more-able, to determine if it is sufficient and consistent across the school.
- The quality of assessment and how effectively it is used throughout the school.
- The impact of leaders and managers at all levels in evaluating school performance and helping push forward sustainable improvements.

Information about the school

This is an above average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Most pupils are from minority ethnic heritages and the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two classes of Reception-age children. There is a privately run after-school club on site, which is subject to a separate inspection. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of staff changes, including the appointment of a new headteacher, the creation of a new senior leadership team, and the recent appointment of five new members of staff. The school has gained several awards, including the Financial Management Standard in Schools and Healthy Schools Status.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

English Martyrs Catholic Primary School is a satisfactory school. The school has a nurturing family atmosphere which contributes to pupils' sense of security. As one pupil said, 'Our teachers care about us.' Strong emphasis is placed on promoting pupils' well-being and on good quality care, guidance and support. As a result, many aspects of pupils' personal development are good. Pupils are proud of their school. That is shown by the way that they are keen to take on extra responsibilities. Pupils are happy to come to school, as reflected in their above-average attendance. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and they are very polite and courteous. Almost without exception in their responses to the inspection questionnaire, parents and carers are very supportive of the school and full of praise for the way in which the school takes care of their children. One parent summed up the common view saying, 'English Martyrs is like one big family. It is a happy place.'

Children make a steady start in Early Years Foundation Stage. However, their progress slows occasionally if they are not given enough guidance when undertaking activities independently. Most pupils continue to make satisfactory-but-variable progress in English and mathematics as they move through the school. That is due largely to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In a few lessons, tasks are not tailored sufficiently well to pupils' needs and the pace of learning slows when pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn actively and independently. An increasing number of pupils are making faster progress where planning for lessons ensures that all groups of pupils, particularly the most-able, are challenged appropriately. The most recent Year 6 test results were good, being above average overall. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was well-above average, particularly in mathematics. Nevertheless, data from recent years, together with inspection evidence, show that attainment is average overall. The proportion making good progress is not yet high enough to raise attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 so that it is consistently above average. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress due to the additional support they receive to meet their specific needs. Pupils' learning is assessed regularly and commented upon in lessons and through the marking of their written work. Although there are many examples of informative marking, the advice given is not always followed up by pupils and, consequently, does not always lead to the desired improvements in subsequent work.

The schools' self-evaluation is accurate and, although some of the recent initiatives have yet to have a full impact, the successes so far demonstrate a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. The staff questionnaires show that all staff support the leadership team and the governing body fully. An improved system to

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monitor the progress of each pupil has been introduced and evaluation procedures to monitor the impact of the school's work are becoming more refined. The monitoring of teaching and learning is undertaken systematically by senior and middle leaders and this has strengthened the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2. Even so, inconsistencies remain, partly because middle leaders are still at the early stages of monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility and the evaluation of lessons and written work does not always focus sufficiently on the progress pupils make. Nevertheless, since the last inspection the school has dealt with most of the identified issues for improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and increase the proportion making at least good progress across the school by:
 - making better use of assessment information to inform teachers' planning and by redressing inconsistencies between classes
 - ensuring that teachers' comments on pupils' work are followed up subsequently to secure further improvement.
- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good across the school by:
 - using the effective features that exist in the school already as a model of good practice
 - improving the pace of learning in lessons, with more opportunities for pupils to learn actively and independently
 - providing appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils, so that they make the best possible progress in all lessons and demonstrate this in their written work.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management by:
 - increasing the effective involvement of middle leaders in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, so that judgements are based on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress
 - increasing the accountability of middle leaders for progress and standards within their areas of responsibility.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment levels and most groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress throughout each key stage. Pupils are always keen to learn and they are confident to ask and answer questions. They show good levels of concentration and enjoy their work, especially when discussing learning together. For example, pupils worked extremely effectively in pairs in a Year 4/5 lesson, when they performed a role play of a situation full of conflict. Pupils were asked to think through issues and dilemmas facing all participants in the scenario. They rose to the challenge and listed a range of possible issues and dilemmas that required choices to be made. Their considerable enjoyment was discernible. In some lessons, progress slows when pupils sit for too long listening to the teacher or when working independently, particularly when activities are insufficiently challenging or exciting. Generally, pupils with English as an additional language make good progress because of the extensive and effective support they receive.

Pupils feel safe in school and this is reflected in the views of their parents and carers. They trust staff greatly and know there is always someone to whom they can talk. Behaviour is good; pupils are kind, courteous, and polite in response to the high expectations of staff. There is a good understanding by pupils of all ages of how to lead healthy lifestyles and good participation rates of extra-curricular clubs ensure pupils' well-being is developed effectively. Those strengths are reflected in the award of Healthy Schools status. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities in school, for example, as school councillors, playground leaders and class prefects. They are active in the local community by, for example, supporting a range of local charities and initiatives.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. It is underpinned by the school's mission statement and strong ethos. Assemblies and class worship provide many opportunities for spiritual reflection. Pupils respect the views of others and have a well-developed sense of fair play. Pupils' satisfactory progress, their above-average attendance and their participation in many activities aimed at developing the skills needed for their future, for example enterprise initiatives, mean that their preparation for the next phase of their education is satisfactory.

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These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory across the school, with some variability in quality between classes. In the better lessons, good planning ensures that varied activities are provided which meet the needs of all groups of pupils and good pace and challenge from the teacher stimulate the pupils’ interest. In some of those lessons, teachers equip pupils well, so that the pupils know how well they are performing and what they have to do to improve the quality of their work. All planned activities have a purpose, which is communicated clearly. As a result, pupils know what they are expected to learn and the reasons for this. In some lessons, pupils enter into thoughtful learning dialogues with their teachers by responding to teachers’ marking and written feedback and this supports their improved engagement in their learning. The school has developed more accurate assessment and target-setting procedures over the past year and, in the good lessons, the results of these findings clearly inform teaching. These effective features, particularly the use of assessment data to inform planning and provide sufficient challenge, are not always found when teaching is no better than satisfactory, or, occasionally, inadequate.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils’ personal development. A good range of initiatives has been implemented to raise pupils’ achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. They are having a positive effect, but have not yet had the full impact on attainment by the end of Year 6. The headteacher and staff have developed a cross-curricular approach to lessons and good links between subjects add meaning and relevance to pupils’ learning. The needs of pupils whose circumstances may

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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make them more vulnerable are being met well increasingly through a wide range of support programmes delivered by teaching assistants and other adults. There are many additional activities to promote learning and enjoyment. Popular clubs include street dance, judo, arts and crafts and choir. Visits enhance the curriculum further and promote pupils’ development. For example, a successful residential trip to Wales for Year 6 provided exciting new outdoor experiences such as climbing, rafting and team building activities.

Care, guidance and support are strengths of the school’s provision. The special educational needs coordinator plays a central part in communicating with families. The school works very well also with a wide range of agencies and much work is done to support individual children both pastorally and academically. Relationships are good throughout the school; emphasis is placed on knowing all pupils individually. Arrangements for pupils joining the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage are effective in enabling them to settle to school routines and are appreciated by parents and carers. Similarly, arrangements for pupils at the end of Year 6 ensure a smooth move to the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Despite the challenges arising from recent high staff turnover, the headteacher and other leaders are committed to priorities that are clearly aimed at raising standards and improving pupils’ personal qualities. All staff and the governing body subscribe to that ambition fully. There is a well-coordinated drive towards improvement that is beginning to have effect. Self-evaluation practices are shared among middle leaders, who are highly motivated and not afraid to use their initiative, but they are not yet fully accountable for standards and progress within their areas or responsibility.

The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory; the school is working hard towards narrowing the achievement gap between groups of pupils. Discrimination is extremely rare and, when encountered, is dealt with well. The use of data to evaluate pupils’ progress is now fully established; information is used to identify pupils who would benefit from additional support. The regular discussions about pupils’ progress have raised the profile of data within the school. Even so, often progress data are not analysed alongside pupils’ progress as seen in lessons and in their written work. That means that middle leaders, in particular, do not have a

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complete a view of the effectiveness of teaching throughout the school.

Governance is good. The governing body is well organised and very involved in the life of the school, enabling it to provide strong support and challenge to the leadership, and it shares senior leaders’ commitment to further improvement. The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met and, as in the case of regulatory requirements for safeguarding pupils and vetting staff, sometimes they exceed them. The governing body provides effective financial management, reflected in the award of Financial Management Standard, and ensures that the school gives satisfactory value for money. Community cohesion is promoted effectively. A thorough audit of the school’s context has taken place since the last inspection and an appropriate action plan was devised subsequently to support the broadening of pupils’ understanding of their place in the local and national communities and the wider world.

The school has built a good range of partnerships, especially with the local secondary school, the local Catholic diocese of schools and a number of sporting and family support groups. There is good engagement with parents and carers, as shown by the turnout during the inspection for the coffee morning to support those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills and knowledge that are broadly similar to those typically expected for their age. Children settle well into school life and benefit from well-structured routines and organisation which help them to feel safe and secure and excited about coming to school. They behave well, are aware of routines, and know what is expected of them. That is because adults are good at promoting their personal development and well-being. Children make good progress in learning sounds and letters as a result of good teaching and the well-structured programme in place. Teachers are making increasingly good use of the information they collect about pupils’ small steps in achievement. They use it well to ensure that the planned activities during adult-led sessions with small groups of pupils take account of the full range of learning needs. However, opportunities for increasing learning are overlooked when children play independently because the purpose of some activities lacks clarity. Furthermore, opportunities to extend language and literacy skills during these times, including outdoors, are missed. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff training is up to date and there are good plans in place for bringing about further improvement. Links with parents and carers are good and adults work well with other agencies to meet the diverse needs of the children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are happy overall with their children’s experience of school. They are especially pleased with children’s safety in school, their sense of enjoyment, their children’s preparation for the future and that the school is led and managed well. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about specific aspects of the school’s work, particularly related to progress. They were investigated throughout the inspection and form part of the evidence used to arrive at judgements. Inspectors judged that pupils’ progress is satisfactory, though not yet consistently good. The school is working effectively to address the issue.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at English Martyr’s Catholic 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 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 373 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	79	17	19	0	0	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	66	73	23	26	0	0	2	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	53	59	29	32	5	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	52	36	40	3	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	59	34	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	48	53	34	38	4	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	46	46	51	1	1	0	0
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)	34	38	47	52	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	36	40	47	52	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	41	48	53	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	36	45	50	5	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	48	53	40	44	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	58	64	32	36	0	0	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



21 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Reading RG30 4BE

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and particularly appreciated the helpfulness of those pupils who spoke to us, shared their work, and explained what they were doing during lessons.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory education and has some important strengths. Your behaviour is good and you enjoy coming to school. It is good to know that you are very happy with the effective way adults look after you and that you feel so safe in school. You have a good knowledge of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and enjoy having lots of responsibilities, such as membership of the school council. You work hard in lessons and reach average standards by the time you leave school. All the adults who work with you are determined to make sure your school keeps getting better.

To ensure that your progress and attainment continue to improve, we have asked the headteacher to make sure that all of your lessons are as good as the best, so that all of you make good progress throughout the school. All of you can help by continuing to work hard and enjoy your learning, and we hope you will do so.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Joseph
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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