

Inspection of an outstanding school: English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

Evelyn Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham, West Midlands B11 3JW

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 November 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to school. They told the inspector that they enjoy all their subjects, especially mathematics. Leaders set high expectations for all pupils to achieve well. Pupils make rapid progress in their reading, writing and mathematics during their time at school.

Pupils behave well in the playground. They show very positive attitudes to the learning in lessons. However, a small number struggle to stay focused if the work is too hard. Although pupils said there is no racism or bullying in school, leaders take swift action on the rare occasions they arise.

Each pupil can discuss any concerns with a trusted adult through the school's 'three houses' approach – 'house of good things, house of worries and house of dreams'. As a result, they feel safe in school.

Pupils are very proud of the way they have embraced the UNICEF core values, such as respect. Pupils can become 'Mini Vinnies', helping those in need within their school community. They enthusiastically tend the plants they have grown in the playground.

Leaders have provided an exceptional level of support to the most vulnerable pupils in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes those who have been made homeless. Parents and carers value the school highly.

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

Leaders have constructed an ambitious curriculum. They aim to broaden pupils' horizons and experiences. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been disruptions to learning. This has led teachers to focus on catching up in English and mathematics. Pupils are now back on track and enjoying a full range of subjects.

Leaders' curriculum plans enable pupils to build on their previous learning. In history, Year 2 pupils learn how to gain information from sources. By Year 5, they can question the reliability of sources. For example, can they trust Pliny's letters written 18 years after Mount Vesuvius erupted? Occasionally, teachers set work that is not well matched to pupils' starting points.

Leaders promote a love of reading. This starts in the early years. Teachers select books carefully to match the letters and sounds children know. This enables pupils to read unfamiliar words successfully. Adults teach pupils to read in an organised way. This follows recent changes to the school's phonics scheme. Adults ensure that pupils understand the meaning of words as well as their correct pronunciation.

Leaders have planned the mathematics curriculum well. Pupils can return to topics in greater depth or revisit them to catch up. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning. However, in a few instances, staff are slow to identify and resolve pupils' misconceptions. Focused numeracy activities around the current topic in Reception help children to make strong progress.

Teachers make suitable adaptations to learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also meet the needs of those who are at the early stage of learning English as an additional language. Pupils flourish in mathematics, including more advanced bilingual learners.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils play well together at breaktimes. They share their play equipment well and take part in mixed-gender football. Pupils and midday supervisors spoke positively about behaviour. Occasionally, there is some low-level disengagement in lessons when pupils find the work too difficult to access.

There are a wide variety of clubs, which are very popular with pupils. These include art, physical education and reading. Leaders have prepared a full programme of trips and visits now that COVID-19 restrictions are being lifted. Leaders prepare well for pupils' broader development. For example, there is a strong focus on female role models, such as scientist Mary Anning, and on diversity in the curriculum. Pupils were very aware of the importance of the COP26 summit 2021, which was taking place that week.

Staff feel positive about working at the school. They feel valued. Leaders have been highly supportive of staff, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have reduced requirements for marking and planning. They now only hold meetings as and when necessary. Training is focused on what is most relevant.

Parents were full of praise for the way leaders, and staff more widely, have responded during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governors are highly experienced and knowledgeable. They provide considerable support and challenge for leaders. They also hold curriculum leaders to account for their subjects.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that making sure work is well matched and ensuring that teachers address misconceptions quickly may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Intervention is swift and effective when early help is required. Pupils appreciate the worry boxes in every classroom where they can report concerns. Staff are well trained to respond to these. Leaders and governors deal effectively with any allegations against staff, and manage appointments well. Pupils know about online harm, and know at an early age to report any unacceptable behaviours.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are occasions when work set for pupils is too challenging to do without support. At times this leads to some pupils becoming disengaged and not finishing their tasks. Leaders should ensure that work set for pupils is consistently well matched to their starting points.
- Occasionally, teachers do not identify pupils' misconceptions quickly enough. This leads to pupils continuing to make errors in their work. Leaders should ensure that teachers identify these misconceptions quickly during lessons, in order to help pupils understand the work.

Background

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

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in January 2016.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	103425
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10199502
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	385
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Suzan O'Meally
Headteacher	Evelyn Harper
Website	www.englishmartyrscatholicprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 and 20 January 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The chair of the governing body has been appointed since the last inspection.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school was judged outstanding at its most recent section 48 inspection in March 2019. The next scheduled inspection is due in 2027. However, section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of staff.

- He spoke to pupils. He met five members of the governing body, including the chair. He spoke by telephone to a representative of the Birmingham Catholic diocese.
- He took account of 31 responses to the Ofsted Parent View free-text service, and 24 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. There were 14 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire, but no responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- He considered information on behaviour, attendance, personal development, safeguarding and child protection.
- He focused deeply on early reading, mathematics, and history. He visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, and spoke to subject leaders, teachers and pupils.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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