

Inspection of English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

Frindsbury Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4JA

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 July 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They know that they are expected to work hard and behave well, and they do. Pupils move sensibly and calmly around the school. They apply themselves to their studies and are keen to achieve well. They are pleased when they are successful and show a joy in learning together.

Demonstrating respect is important here. Pupils know that everyone is valued and included. This helps to ensure that school is a harmonious and happy place for them. Parents are positive about the school, which they frequently describe as caring and friendly.

Pupils feel safe. They are confident that staff will listen and respond if they have any concerns. This means that they do not worry about bullying. Any issues are quickly resolved. Pupils describe their school as a place of peace and a source of inspiration.

There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to be part of the wider life of the school. They can be reading buddies, anti-bullying ambassadors or part of the eco committee. Pupils relish these roles and perform their duties diligently. Pupils enjoy learning about themselves and the world around them through taking part in activities, such as 'well-being Wednesday'.

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

Leaders have carefully constructed an appropriate curriculum. They are particularly ambitious for pupils to learn to read, write and master key mathematical concepts. End of key stage outcomes and pupils' work demonstrate the success of this focus for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND). Leaders' accurate identification of pupils' additional needs and effective support ensures that all feel included and are able to achieve well.

In other subjects, the curriculum has been designed to build from early years to Year 6 towards the national curriculum end points. In most subjects, the curriculum is implemented effectively and is helping pupils to learn well. For example, in physical education (PE), children in early years begin to master throwing and catching with bean bags before moving on to using balls. However, in a few subjects, such as art and design, teachers do not always plan effective sequences of learning that build pupils' cumulative knowledge. This means that pupils' knowledge is not as secure in all subjects.

Teachers focus on building pupils' language and vocabulary. This helps pupils explain their thinking and supports teachers to spot and correct any misconceptions. Teachers check what pupils know and understand regularly. They adapt their teaching accordingly, so that pupils' needs, including pupils with SEND, are met well.

Pupils learn to read quickly and well. Right from the start in early years, children are introduced to phonics. All staff have had training to enable them to ably teach this important aspect of early reading. Staff match reading books to the sounds children learn, so that they can practise applying their knowledge. Any pupils who struggle are quickly identified and given the help they need to catch up.

Pupils are keen readers. They read their own books with sustained concentration and enjoy listening to the stories their teachers read to them. Pupils are keen to offer opinions about characters and storylines. Leaders have ensured that the library is well stocked and well used. Pupils are encouraged to enjoy books throughout the day, including break and lunchtimes.

Staff manage behaviour well. The school's values are used effectively to support pupils and the choices they make. Staff intervene quickly and effectively if there is any low-level disruption, so that issues do not escalate and learning is not interrupted. Pupils' behaviour is overwhelmingly positive.

Teachers focus on developing independence to support pupils in their learning. Younger pupils carry water jugs carefully and change their painting water sensibly as needed. Older pupils use dictionaries to check the meanings of words when they are reading. Pupils are reflective about their own beliefs and learn about and respect others' faiths, feelings and values.

Governors know the school well. They ensure that they have the information they need to hold leaders to account. Governors also check that financial resources are being well used to support pupils. They visit the school regularly and talk to leaders and staff to find out more and to check the information they are given. However, governors have not ensured that all statutory information is up to date and available as it should be.

Staff enjoy working here. They feel well supported by leaders who, they say, do everything that they can to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on them. They feel that leaders care deeply about their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that everyone is trained, regularly updated and know what to look out for. Staff understand and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities well. There is a clear system for reporting concerns, which is systematically reviewed by leaders to identify any issues. When it is needed, leaders act quickly to help secure the right support for pupils and their families.

Leaders are aware of the needs of the locality and the school community. They work in close partnership with other schools and agencies to develop their understanding and share information appropriately to help keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few foundation subjects, teachers do not always plan effective sequences of lessons that build towards the school's curriculum end points. This means that pupils do not acquire or develop their knowledge well enough. Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge they need to teach sequences of learning that build pupils' component knowledge equally well in all subjects.
- Governors have not ensured that some statutory information has been kept up to date and made available as required. Governors should implement processes to ensure that they review and keep up-to-date statutory policies and information. They should ensure that the required information is made available to parents as set out in the Department for Education's guidance.

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](#)' 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	118766
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10269067
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	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan Hibbert
Headteacher	Catherine Thacker
Website	www.englishmartyrs.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The last Section 48 denominational inspection was carried out by the Education Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Southwark in October 2021.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with school leaders. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body. She held a meeting with a representative of the local authority and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese of Southwark.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and PE. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils read.
- Safeguarding records were reviewed, including the single central record and appointment procedures. The inspectors spoke to staff about safeguarding and spoke to pupils about the support they have in understanding how to keep safe.
- The inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys. An inspector spoke to some parents on the morning of the second day of the inspection.
- The inspectors talked to staff to gather their views about the school, including their workload and well-being. The inspectors met with several groups of pupils, as well as speaking to pupils during lessons and during playtime and lunchtime.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Giles Osborne

Ofsted Inspector

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