

Inspection of a good school: English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG30 4BE

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 January 2024

Outcome

English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils understand the school's values and aspire to live up to them. Older pupils are positive about their prospects after leaving English Martyrs'. Those new to the school settle quickly. Expectations are high. Pupils work hard and want to be their best. They talk about the importance of respect for others and are confident that faith, hope and love are solid foundations for future happiness and success.

Pupils say that teachers are patient and kind. They are happy to discuss their conflicting opinions about their favourite staff, and about the 'who' and the 'why', in a reasoned way. A group of pupils agreed unanimously that staff are fair, though sometimes there are 'consequences for your actions'. A clear message from pupils throughout the inspection was that they feel safe and cared for here.

The school's Catholic ethos underpins all aspects of day-to-day life. Kindness is expected. Pupils understand this. 'Tattle talk' is frowned upon, though responded to positively if necessary. A positive attitude of 'we can fix that sort of thing together' is apparent when talking to pupils. This sentiment was also apparent in classrooms, where pupils are happy to work together towards achieving their best.

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

This is a school that works hard to meet the needs of all pupils, no matter what their background or barriers in life. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are supported well, and not just in the classroom. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively, including those who find it difficult to maintain focus in a busy classroom environment.

The school has a varied ethnic mix of pupils, reflecting the local community it serves. Leaders at all levels see this as a strength and work hard to ensure that their inclusive vision is understood and enacted by all staff. The result of this is a caring and nurturing 'school family', where adults work with dedication and purpose.

Pupils' personal development has a high priority. They enjoy raising money for charitable causes. The choir is popular and performs at a range of events in the local community. Older pupils enjoy residential trips, including to 'wild Wales', which are designed to develop resilience and perseverance. The school council and the 'Mini Vinnies' group are very active in their work to contribute to the school community on behalf of all pupils.

The school's curriculum is evolving. The core subjects of mathematics and English are taught well, though pupils' writing continues to be a focus. The school's Nursery and Reception Years succeed in developing children's love of learning. Children with SEND are identified and supported from the beginning. Classroom visits to the early years provided sound evidence of strong practice. Children know what is expected and are keen to explore the opportunities that staff provide for them to learn new things.

The school's work to teach pupils to read is sound but developing. New resources and assessment materials have been introduced recently. Pupils in danger of falling behind are supported well. However, although the school's reading outcomes at the end of Year 6 are sound, there are inconsistencies in the way staff implement the school's chosen phonics programme. While some staff deliver phonics sessions well, others are less confident, meaning pupils' progress towards reading fluently is not as strong as it might be.

Pupils love mathematics here. Staff are knowledgeable and bring mathematics to life. The impact of this is evident in the school's mathematics outcomes but also clear to see during lesson visits. Teaching of mathematics is strong across all phases of the school. Additional support for pupils with SEND or those in need of additional support is effective. Children in Nursery are confident with numbers and counting. Older pupils relish the challenge that staff provide. One classroom visit was brought to life by pupils' restrained yet audible cheer when the teacher provided additional challenge in the lesson.

The school's wider curriculum is evolving. New subject leaders are stepping up and contributing well to ongoing subject reviews. While some audits are complete, others are not so well advanced. This work has been completed in history, where pupils talk with increasing confidence about what they know. Pupils in upper key stage 2 are happy to compare the similarities or differences between Roman Britain and the Anglo-Saxon period. Pupils are beginning to think as budding historians and relish history lessons. One pupil took this further in a conversation with the inspector, insisting excitedly that he felt he was 'made for history' because of the new things he was now learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff deliver the school's early reading programme as confidently as they might. When this is the case, the quality of phonics teaching is inconsistent. This means that some pupils do not benefit from the high-quality teaching they deserve. Leaders need

to ensure that the school's phonics programme is delivered with the highest degree of fidelity possible in all phases and by all staff who teach pupils to read.

- Not all foundation subject schemes of work are detailed enough in identifying the component knowledge staff need to teach pupils. This means that, in some subjects, pupils are not building strongly enough on what they have been taught before. Some successful work has already been completed, but leaders now need to redouble their efforts to complete their curriculum review. This will support teachers in their work to plan and teach what leaders want pupils to know, remember and do in all subjects across the curriculum.

Background

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

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged school to be good in November 2013.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	110004
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10296146
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	433
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rosalind Doctor
Headteacher	Catherine Doberska
Website	www.englishmartyrs.reading.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school in the Diocese of Portsmouth. The school also works closely with the local authority, Reading Borough Council.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place in June 2023.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. He met with the chair of the governing body accompanied by three other governors. He also met with two representatives of the local authority and talked to a representative of the diocese on the telephone.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. He heard some pupils read to a known adult. He also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school.
- The inspector considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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