

INSPECTION REPORT

ENGLISH MARTYRS RC SCHOOL

Tower Hill, London

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100962

Headteacher: Sister Clare Halpin

Reporting inspector: Mr George Crowther
18814

Dates of inspection: 4th – 6th March 2002

Inspection number: 198267

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Peter Edwards

Date of previous inspection: 20th October 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

English Martyrs is a medium-sized, voluntary aided primary school for boys and girls who are 3-11 years old. It has 220 pupils, including 28 who attend full-time in the nursery. The school is situated on the edge of the city of London, but draws pupils from a wide geographical area, owing to its denominational status. The school serves families who have a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and social circumstances, but a high proportion are Catholic. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Overall, pupils' attainment when they start school is about average, though there is a significant proportion of pupils with weak skills. Across the school, 33 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, for a variety of learning and behavioural difficulties, but none has a statement. The proportion of pupils needing additional support is below average. Compared with the national picture, a very high proportion of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with European, black African and black Caribbean being the largest groups. Eighty-one pupils have English as an additional language, and 45 are at the early stages of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

English Martyrs is a good school that provides an effective education for its pupils in a very purposeful environment. Pupils' achievements are good and they reach standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 that are much better than those gained by pupils in similar schools. Pupils learning English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs, make particularly good progress. The school effectively promotes positive values, based on its Christian principles and, as a result, pupils exhibit very good attitudes to learning, very good behaviour and a clear respect for others. The quality of teaching is good in the great majority of lessons, even though two teachers are only temporarily part of the staff team. The curriculum is broad, balanced and well matched to the needs and interests of the pupils. The headteacher provides strong, effective leadership and good management, which have helped the school to improve standards of attainment over the past four years. The school provides good value for the money it receives. There is a strong commitment amongst all the staff to continue to improve the quality of education.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The staff, with a strong lead from the headteacher, create a learning environment that encourages pupils to do their best.
- Pupils' achievements are good and, by Year 6, they reach standards that are much better than those gained by pupils in similar schools.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The school fosters positive and productive links with parents, which make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning.
- The headteacher provides very clear educational direction for the school, which enables the staff to continually improve the quality of pupils' learning.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The standard of pupils' writing is not as high as it could be.
- Procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, identifying areas for improvement, and monitoring the success of action taken are not systematic enough.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

When it was last inspected, in October 1997, English Martyrs was judged to be a good school with many strengths. Its caring community, with a strong and positive ethos, was particularly praised. Since then, the school has sustained all these positive features and made good, further improvement. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has continued to improve, from an above average starting point, in line with the national trend. The school has also made good progress in addressing the action points from the last inspection report. The quality of teaching is more consistent across the school because teachers' expertise has been enhanced through well-planned training. All subjects now have a scheme of work that provides good guidance for teachers when they are planning tasks for pupils, and links between subjects are identified in teachers' planning. The school is making far more use of information about pupils' attainment and progress to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Subject co-ordinators are playing a more active role in leading developments in their subjects, but the quality of teaching and learning is still not evaluated systematically enough to identify weaknesses and monitor improvements. The school has worked hard to provide tasks that challenge pupils and has largely been successful. In a few lessons, however, work is still not challenging enough. The school is continuing to improve, and has a good capacity to raise standards further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	A	B	D	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A	C	B	A	
science	B	B	C	A	

When children start school in the nursery, their overall attainment is normally about average, though some year groups have lower attainment. The results of assessment made shortly after the children join the reception class show that attainment continues to be close to what would be expected for pupils' ages. During the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception), children's achievements are satisfactory and, by the time they enter Year 1, attainment is about average in all areas of learning.

Throughout the rest of the school, pupils' achievements are good. Results of the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 showed that attainment in reading and mathematics was above average, but attainment in writing was below average. This is being acted upon by the school and is part of its plans for improvement. Results of national tests at the end of Year 6 were very strong in 1999 and 2000, but rather lower in 2001 because the group tested contained a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than is usual, so fewer pupils reached the higher Level 5, particularly in English. Nonetheless, the 2001 results compare very favourably with those gained by pupils in schools that have similar social circumstances. Schools set targets for the proportion of Year 6 pupils expected to reach the national average, Level 4. In 2001, the school reached its target for mathematics, but not for English.

Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 6 is above national expectations in mathematics and close to expectations in English and science. The proportion of higher-attaining pupils is not as large as in past years, but the great majority of these pupils should reach the nationally expected Level 4 by the end of the year. Overall, pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are about average throughout the school, with a particular strength in reading.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to come to school, they are enthusiastic and they enjoy their learning. They generally concentrate well in lessons and offer their ideas readily. This provides a very good basis for learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are polite and friendly. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. This supports their learning effectively. Only one pupil has been excluded from school in the past year.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Very positive relationships between pupils and with adults are a strength of the school. Whatever their background, pupils work and play well together. They respond eagerly when given opportunities to take on responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Broadly in line with the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	satisfactory	good	good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good overall, with a number of strong features. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and, in about three-quarters of the lessons observed, teaching was good, occasionally very good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Throughout the school, careful planning, praise and encouragement, and the use of a good range of teaching methods are strong features of most lessons. Teachers make sure that pupils develop good work habits. As a result, pupils know exactly what is expected of them, they enjoy their lessons, work hard and make good gains in learning. The good management and organisation of pupils' learning are also strong features, which help them to concentrate on their work and get a lot done. In the best lessons seen, the teachers' injected pace and challenge into the activities, which ensured that the pupils made rapid progress. In the few lessons where there were weaknesses, the pace of learning was slower, the whole-class session lasted too long and tasks for the more able pupils did not fully stretch them. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils successfully, including those with special needs and those learning English as an additional language.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which is well planned and organised. Visits and visitors add breadth and interest to the curriculum. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in which many of the pupils are involved.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The needs of these pupils are identified clearly. They are given work that is well matched to their needs and effective support in lessons so they make good, often very good progress. The co-ordinator organises provision very effectively.
Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language	Very good. Staff cater very well for the wide range of language ability amongst these pupils. They are fully included in all lessons and given very good support by adults, including the specialist teacher. As a result, they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. An emphasis on pupils' personal development permeates the work of the school. A good range of activities in lessons and in the school encourages pupils to become confident, mature and responsible. Provision for pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is very good, and there is good provision for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good care and support for its pupils, through a range of effective procedures.
Assessment	Satisfactory. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are well established. Teachers use the information to set learning targets for pupils. As yet, however, assessment is not used systematically to monitor improvements in pupils' learning.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has very positive links with parents. It encourages them to take an active interest in their children's work and to support learning at home. Parents think that the school is doing a very good job.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very strong, purposeful leadership and a clear focus on maintaining and raising standards. Staff with senior management responsibilities play a full part in planning and leading improvements. Subject co-ordinators are increasingly playing an influential role in developing their subjects.
How well the governing body fulfils its responsibilities	Good. Governors are very supportive, well organised, and they bring considerable expertise to their role. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. Each governor has a link with a subject of the curriculum, which is the focus for visits to school. Governors have a good appreciation of the strengths of the school and are increasingly involved in monitoring its work and planning for further improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has systems in place for monitoring pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching and learning. As yet, the gathering of information is not systematic enough to ensure that weaknesses are identified precisely or that planned action for improvement is monitored rigorously.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and management are good. The school makes good use of its funding to raise standards, and plans ahead methodically. It pays due regard to the principles of best value.

The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school is well staffed, including a specialist teacher to support pupils learning English as an additional language. Teachers and classroom assistants are a committed, hard working team. Administrative staff are welcoming and efficient. The building and grounds provide good facilities for learning. Resources for learning are good for most subjects. They are good, and improving rapidly, for information and communication technology.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Their children enjoy going to school and make good progress. ▪ Teaching is good. ▪ They are kept well informed about their child's progress. ▪ The school is very approachable if parents have concerns. ▪ The school expects children to work hard, achieve their best, and helps them to become mature and responsible. ▪ Behaviour in the school is good. ▪ The school is well led and managed. 	Parents raised no significant concerns.

Just over half of the parents returned the questionnaire, and 19 attended the meeting. The great majority of these parents are very pleased with all aspects of the school's work, and inspectors' judgements support parents' very positive views. At the meeting, parents' overall view was that English Martyrs is a very good school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The staff, with a strong lead from the headteacher, create a learning environment that encourages pupils to do their best

1. In all situations around the school, the headteacher and staff have very clear, high expectations of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and the effort they should put into their work. The school's strong, positive ethos was praised at the previous inspection, and remains a very important factor in the school's success. The headteacher promotes a very purposeful climate for learning, which is evident in her good relationships with the pupils, the priority she gives to their welfare, her understanding of their needs and her resolute attention to Christian values in all the school's work. She is ever present around the school during the day, such as at lunchtime leading prayers, or on the playground. In this way, the headteacher leads the social, spiritual and educational life of the school, setting a tone that supports all aspects of pupils' learning. She greets pupils and leads worship at the beginning of the day and she spends time working with children. For example, all the pupils heard to read by inspectors in Year 2 had also read to the headteacher at some stage during the year.

2. The staff also play a very important part in ensuring that pupils are used to working in a purposeful environment and know why they are in school. Around the school and in lessons, they provide very consistent messages about what is expected of the pupils in terms of their behaviour and learning. Adults praise pupils when they do well and gently remind them when they could do better. A number of teachers have considerable experience at the school, which provides stability, but those who are less experienced or employed temporarily have quickly absorbed the school's aims and values so that they also promote a positive ethos. The quality of teaching is good across the school, which helps pupils to be effective learners.

3. With such firm foundations for learning and personal development, pupils are able to respond successfully and achieve well. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They like coming to school, they enjoy their lessons and they try to do their best. Pupils who talked to inspectors mentioned a wide range of subjects and activities that they enjoy. They particularly talked about the activities that take place outside lessons, which are an important part of what the school offers. For example, Year 3 pupils led an assembly for the rest of the school about 'special meals' and, though they had relatively little time to prepare, the good quality of each child's contribution showed that they were eager to do well. Members of the School Council talked to inspectors about their activities, and it was clear that they valued the responsibility they had been given. For example, they mentioned the part they had played in developing the playground rules.

4. Pupils' behaviour is very good, both in lessons and around the school. Inspectors saw no significant misbehaviour. Parents also said they feel that the very good behaviour of the children is a strength of the school. As a result, in lessons, pupils were focused on their learning and showed very good levels of concentration, particularly when completing independent work. Relationships between pupils and with staff are also very good. In a number of lessons, such as when Year 3 pupils investigated materials that are magnetic or non-magnetic, pupils' good relationships helped them to carry out group work effectively.

5. Very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development plays an important part in ensuring that pupils' personal qualities develop well alongside their academic work. There are planned times when this takes place, such as in acts of worship and when pupils gather in a circle to discuss their views and feelings. Nurturing personal and spiritual qualities is also part and parcel of the daily life of the school, and is enhanced considerably by the rich programme of visits and visitors that is a strong feature of the school's curriculum.

6. All of these factors contribute to pupils' academic progress. Pupils' achievements are good as they move through the school and they reach standards that compare very favourably with those attained by pupils in similar schools. It is the school's attention to creating a positive environment for learning that enables it to fulfil its mission to 'nurture the spiritual, intellectual and emotional development of each child'.

Pupils' achievements are good and, by Year 6, they reach standards that are much better than those gained by pupils in similar schools

*(Pupils' **attainment** is what they know, understand and can do at a particular point in time e.g. at the end of Year 2. Pupils' **achievements** are the progress they make in relation to their initial attainment. Therefore, a child starting school with low attainment may achieve well but still not reach the nationally expected standard of attainment.)*

7. There is a range of attainment amongst the children who join the nursery but, overall, it is about average compared with what is expected nationally. There is, however, a significant group of pupils with weak skills in communication, language and literacy, and whose personal and social development is not as good as would be expected. Currently, approximately a third of the children in the nursery are learning English as an additional language, the great majority of whom are at an early stage. Satisfactory teaching and a good range of learning experiences enable children to make sound progress in the nursery and the reception class. By the time children join Year 1, overall attainment is close to national expectations.

8. In the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2, results were above average in reading and mathematics, but below average in writing. Based on teachers' assessments, attainment in science was below average. In all four areas, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 of attainment was close to the national average. In reading and mathematics, a significant proportion reached the higher Level 3, but no pupils reached this level in writing or science. The school has identified pupils' attainment in writing and science as areas for improvement.

9. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 2 is close to national expectations in English, mathematics and science, and there is a significant proportion of pupils who should reach the higher Level 3 in reading, mathematics and science by the end of the year. During Key Stage 1, pupils' achievements are good overall. Those who began school learning English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs make particularly good progress because they are very well supported in lessons. All but a few of these pupils reach the nationally expected standard by the end of Year 2. Pupils' achievements are good in reading because the school has a systematic programme of

teaching, and parents make a strong contribution to regular practice. Achievements are good in mathematics because the school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy effectively and the quality of teaching is good. In writing, whilst achievements are satisfactory, pupils are not having enough opportunities to write at length, and much of their work consists of brief exercises. Pupils are not able to develop the structure, content and range of their writing so that they can reach a higher level of attainment.

10. Results of the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 6 were above average in mathematics, average in science, but below average in English. This year group contained a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than is usual for the school. Nonetheless, the results compared very favourably with those gained by similar schools (schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). In particular, the mathematics and science results were well above average compared with similar schools. Over the past four years, though there have been fluctuations, there has been a steady improvement in the school's results, similar to the national trend.

11. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that attainment in the current Year 6 is above national expectations in mathematics, and close to expectations in English and science. This year group contains fewer high attaining pupils than in past years. Pupils continue to make good progress during Key Stage 2 because the quality of teaching is good. Those learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs continue to be very well supported so they make good, often very good, progress. Pupils' achievements in information and communication technology, a weakness at the last inspection, are satisfactory and improving rapidly, owing to better resources and increased staff expertise.

12. An important reason for pupils' good achievements across the school is the way in which teachers ensure that all groups of pupils are fully involved in lessons and learning, and that their needs are met. For example, boys and girls do equally well in national tests, and it is noticeable in lessons that they are expected to work well together. The school has pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, but all work and learn well together, and there are no significant differences in their achievements.

13. Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is good in most lessons. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding and they generally plan work so that pupils can take the next step in their learning. The pupils' very positive response to their teachers, and the praise and encouragement they receive for trying their best are also important factors in promoting good achievement. Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievements have improved because the school has continued to place a significant emphasis on motivating pupils and providing a setting that values effort and success.

The quality of teaching and learning is good

14. The quality of teaching is good overall, with a number of strong features. Teaching is very consistent in quality and expectations. During the inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was seen and, in three-quarters of the lessons, teaching was good, and occasionally very good. This is particularly commendable given that two teachers are part of the staff team on a temporary basis. It is also an improvement since the previous inspection when just less than half of the teaching was judged to be good or better. The good management and organisation of pupils' learning are particularly strong features of the teaching, which help pupils to concentrate on their work and get a lot done.

15. Only three lessons were observed in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) in which the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall. A wide range of well-planned activities interests the

children and provides many opportunities to enrich their experience. For example, children in the reception class had grown cress seeds and they were very interested in looking at them closely and discussing what they needed to grow. All the staff support the children's learning effectively, with a particular emphasis on developing their language skills. The less able children in the reception class gain more from working in small groups, with adult support, than they do from the whole-class literacy and numeracy sessions.

16. In the lessons seen throughout the rest of the school, teachers had a confident knowledge of the subject. For example, in an English lesson for Year 4, the teacher used four books with a common theme of 'The sea and shore' to exemplify how authors use simile to enliven their descriptions. The pupils had heard extracts from these books and were able to use this knowledge to write similes for their own descriptions. It was the teacher's good choice of texts and her ability to use them effectively that enabled the pupils to make good gains in learning. The specialist teacher for music has very good knowledge and skills in her subject that enliven her teaching.

17. Basic skills are well taught throughout the school. Reading is taught methodically, using a structured scheme, so most pupils make good progress during the infants. Guided reading sessions help pupils to build their skills steadily. Spelling and handwriting are given good attention but, throughout the school, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length, independently. In mathematics, counting and calculating skills are taught effectively. For example, Year 5 pupils made good gains in strengthening their skills in mental calculation, finding fractions and decimals of weights, so they could say what a quarter or 0.8 of a kilogram would be in grams.

18. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly. They identify clear learning objectives, which are shared with pupils, either orally or in writing, so that they know exactly what they are trying to achieve. Careful planning provides a good structure for pupils' learning. For example, in an English lesson for Year 2, the teacher wanted pupils to write alternative endings for a story. Her expressive reading of 'The fisherman and his wife' held the pupils' interest and, when she reached a certain point in the plot, she stopped and encouraged a lively discussion about how the story might end. Full of ideas, the pupils made good progress with their individual writing, which they shared at the end of the lesson. The teacher's good planning ensured that the pupils were well motivated throughout the lesson, worked hard and achieved the objective.

19. In most lessons, teachers have high but appropriate expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, pupils in Year 1 learnt about describing characters in a story. They thought about the words they might use to describe Cinderella, and the teacher asked challenging questions about her personality as well as appearance. The pupils then had to describe The Ugly Sisters. The task was very well matched to pupils' abilities, with a specialist teacher working with the pupils learning English as an additional language, the class teacher working with the least able pupils, and others asked to write an amount appropriate to their skills. As a result, all the pupils made very good progress on a challenging task. In a few lessons across the school, however, the work given to the middle and higher-attaining pupils was not challenging enough so they finished quickly and did not make the progress of which they were capable.

20. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language (EAL) is good. Lesson planning takes account of the different needs of these pupils so that they can make progress towards their learning targets. All these pupils are fully included in lessons, and it is often difficult to identify them because they are so well integrated. Where tasks are largely the same for all pupils, those with special needs or EAL have additional support from a teacher or an assistant. As a result, these pupils are suitably challenged, receive the right amount of support,

and make good progress. The result of good teaching is that, by the end of Year 6, many pupils with special educational needs or EAL reach the nationally expected standard in English and mathematics.

21. Lessons are well organised and teachers use a good range of methods and strategies to promote learning. They have high expectations of pupils being attentive, concentrating on tasks, and working hard. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson about germination, a probing question and answer session extended the pupils' thinking, and the subsequent practical activities helped them to understand the conditions needed for seeds to germinate and grow. The pupils found work with a digital microscope particularly fascinating. Group and individual work is usually productive, particularly where pupils work collaboratively on practical activities, as seen in a number of science lessons.

22. Teachers manage pupils' learning and behaviour effectively. They praise good work and behaviour, and use the school's clear procedures consistently. Because teachers are positive, in most lessons pupils respond by listening attentively, concentrating on their work and behaving well. An important feature of the good teaching seen was the good pace of learning. For example, in a Year 3 music lesson, the teacher had planned a series of activities, based on 'The Carnival of the Animals' by Saint Saens in which pupils listened to the music, tried to decide the animal that was being portrayed, and made their own compositions. The lesson moved quickly, holding the pupils' interest and ensuring that they learnt a lot. A weakness in few lessons that were otherwise satisfactory was that the pace of work was too slow, so pupils coasted rather than making a real effort. Classroom assistants make a very good contribution to most lessons, particularly working with groups of pupils.

23. Teachers have good strategies to assess pupils' understanding. They usually begin the lesson with a review of previous learning to check what pupils know. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, this revealed the pupils' poor understanding of angles and the teacher used this well to direct the subsequent learning. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is satisfactory overall, though much of it is restricted to ticks and occasional praise. Only in a few cases had teachers posed questions, noted the level of pupils' attainment, or suggested ways in which work might be improved. Arrangements for homework are good. The school has a clear policy, understood by parents and followed consistently by teachers, which results in a homework making a valuable contribution to pupils' learning at school.

The school fosters positive and productive links with parents, which make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning

24. The school is part of a close-knit community centred on the parish of English Martyrs. Although some families have moved away from the immediate vicinity of the school and church, often living many miles away, they still choose to send their children to the school, partly because of their ties with the parish, and partly because they feel it provides a good education. There are many families who have attended the school for two or three generations. Those families who are relatively new to the school also recognise and value the Christian principles and community spirit that are central to its work. These strongly-felt bonds with English Martyrs School are the basis for productive links with parents.

25. The school keeps parents well informed through its prospectus, newsletters and governors' annual report for parents. These documents are rather formal and the format and content are not always best suited to a parent audience. However, at their meeting, parents said that they felt well informed about developments in school. The school holds termly discussions to keep parents informed about their children's progress, and these are very well attended. It also provides a good-quality report at the end of the year. As a result, the great majority of parents feel that they are well informed about how their children are doing at school. There is also a good deal of informal exchange of information, with teachers taking time to chat with parents at the end of the school day. Inspectors observed the

good relationships that are evident between teachers and parents. Parents say they feel very comfortable approaching the school with any concerns and that the staff respond quickly.

26. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning at home. From the time children start school, parents are asked to read with them, and most do. Pupils' reading diaries, particularly in the infants, show that most parents provide very good support. As pupils move through the school, they are expected to complete other tasks at home, largely in English and mathematics. At their meeting parents said that there is a very clear pattern of homework and that they know the school expects their support. As a result, parental support for their children's learning at home makes a significant contribution to learning at school.

27. Parents are also involved in the work of the school in a range of other activities. They organize social events, such as 'Wimbledon Day' when sports for all ages are combined with fund-raising activities, which enable parents to raise significant amounts of money to purchase better resources. Parents attend a range of special occasions in school, from the termly coffee afternoons to religious celebrations. Parents help on the many visits that children make to places of educational interest, as was seen when Year 3 visited The Tower of London during the inspection. At their meeting, parents said that, if they wanted to be involved in school, there were plenty of opportunities for them to do so.

28. As a result of the very good links forged with parents, they express very strong satisfaction with the work of the school. The return rate of questionnaires was high, and these showed that the great majority of parents are very pleased with almost all aspects of the school. In particular, parents believe that the school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve, teaches them well, and ensures that they make good progress. Inspectors agree with parents' very positive assessment of the school.

The headteacher provides very clear educational direction for the school, which enables the staff to continually improve the quality of pupils' learning

29. The headteacher is very experienced and she knows the school, its families and the members of the wider English Martyrs' community very well. She also knows each pupil well, as was clear when she talked about how individuals had progressed and the very specific reasons why particular pupils had done so well. Her leadership of the school is based on strong Christian values and clear educational principles. She wants all the pupils to achieve as much as they can, and she values their personal development equally as highly as their academic success. It is her values that set the tone within the school.

30. The headteacher leads the staff in providing a productive environment for teaching and learning. She expects pupils to behave well, to show positive attitudes to their work, and to try to do their best. These high, consistent expectations are evident in lessons and around the school. They support teachers in their teaching and pupils in their learning. Parents are very pleased with the headteacher's leadership of the school and they particularly commented on the high standards she expects.

31. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has led the drive to improve pupils' standards of attainment. Pupils' results in national tests have been analysed carefully and action taken within the school improvement plan to improve areas of relative weakness. The headteacher has also supported the ICT co-ordinator in improving both resources and pupils' achievements in the subject. By forming a middle management team, the headteacher has ensured that she makes best use of the talents of senior staff in planning and executing improvements.

32. In all aspects of the school's work, at prayer, at play or learning in lessons, the headteacher's leadership and influence enables English Martyrs to be an effective school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The standard of pupils' writing is not as high as it could be

33. Results of the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 were above the national average in reading and mathematics, but below average in writing. While the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 in writing was close to the national average, no pupils gained the higher Level 3, and a smaller proportion than nationally gained the higher grade within Level 2. In contrast, almost half of the pupils reached the higher Level 3 in mathematics. Nationally, there is higher attainment in reading and mathematics than writing, but the discrepancy in the school's results indicates that, in the infants, more able pupils, in particular, are not being challenged sufficiently to improve their writing.

34. Results of the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 6 showed a similar weakness, with attainment in English being below the national average. Closer examination of these results shows that pupils' attainment in writing was weaker than in reading. Once again, it was the below average proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 that reduced the school's overall performance. It should be borne in mind, however, that the school has gained much higher results in English in previous years and that, for 2001, the school's results were better than those gained by similar schools.

35. The school's own analysis of these results led to raising attainment in writing becoming an important priority in the school improvement plan. A range of actions have been put in place, including providing more time for writing, both in English and in other subjects. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work across the school showed that they are still completing very few pieces of extended writing. For example, the current Year 2 pupils have only completed three pieces of extended writing in their English books, and most of the rest of the work is short exercises about particular language features. The work in Year 6 includes a rather higher proportion of extended writing, but not sufficient to ensure that pupils' skills develop steadily. There is also little evidence that older pupils in the juniors are learning to enhance the quality of their writing by improving initial drafts.

36. A scrutiny of pupils' work in other subjects of the curriculum revealed some opportunities for extended writing, best in Years 5 and 6, such as factual writing in history about the lives of children living in the 19th century, or retelling of Bible stories in religious education. However, the amount of writing, and the fact that most of it is completed without improvement, mean that it does not make a significant contribution to pupils becoming better writers.

37. Teachers' marking of pupils' writing does not indicate that they are identifying the next step pupils can take to improve its content and quality. In some areas of learning, pupils have targets for improving their skills, but this is not done consistently with writing.

38. The school recognises that it may have to adapt the current pattern of work in English to create more time for pupils to write at greater length. While the school has introduced the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy effectively, the standard format of lessons does not allow sufficient time to develop a piece of writing, particularly for the older pupils.

Procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, identifying areas for improvement, and monitoring the success of action taken are not systematic enough

39. Since the previous inspection, this aspect of the school's work has improved. Then, there was little evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and co-ordinators were not much involved in evaluating the quality of work in their subjects. Despite improvements, the school is not getting the best from the effort it puts in to monitoring and evaluating its work.

40. The school has a number of appropriate systems in place. For example, teachers assess pupils' attainment regularly, particularly in English and mathematics, to monitor their progress and detect any weaknesses in the quality of learning. On the basis of assessments carried out at the end of each school year, teachers set targets for each pupil at the beginning of the next year, shared with parents, so that future progress can be tracked. This is good practice. However, it is not clear what each teacher needs to do to help pupils to reach their targets, or the more general curriculum provision that needs to be made.

41. The school analyses the results of national assessments to identify weaknesses in teaching and learning, and outlines action to be taken within its school improvement plan. However, the plan is not clear enough about what level of improvement will constitute success or about the monitoring that will take place to measure improvement. For example, the plan recognises the need to improve pupils' achievements in writing, but does not identify a target for raised attainment, specific aspects of pupils' writing that need to be improved, or how staff intend to monitor progress on the action that is to be taken. In science, the school wants more pupils to reach the higher Level 3 by the end of Year 2, but there are no specific strategies recommended that the teacher should pursue, and no monitoring in place to ensure that the work provided for pupils is sufficiently challenging. The target is correct, but the means of reaching it are unclear.

42. The school has implemented performance management effectively, setting targets for development for the whole school and individual staff, and monitoring progress towards them. This is a useful element of the school's self-evaluation systems. The current focus on improving pupils' attainment in writing is mirrored in each teacher's targets.

43. Compared with the previous inspection, there are now more opportunities for co-ordinators to monitor the work in their subjects, particularly in English and mathematics. For example, the English co-ordinator has observed teaching in all classes, evaluated teachers' planning and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work. However, there is little evidence that this good work has resulted in specific action to improve areas of weakness.

44. The school is not being precise enough about the reasons for evaluating its work, which would enable it to be more specific about the questions that need to be asked and the type of information that needs to be gathered. Being more systematic about evaluating aspects of its work would enable the school to identify more precisely the weaknesses and plan action to be taken more rigorously. For example, at present staff training is linked more to whole-school targets in the school improvement plan rather than the outcomes of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. With a more focused approach, the good work that the school is already doing in gathering information about the quality of its work would support school improvement more effectively.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. In order to further improve the work of the school, the headteacher, staff and governors should now:

- ◆ Raise standards of attainment in writing, as planned, by:

- adjusting the use of curriculum time so that pupils have opportunities to write at sufficient length, depending on their existing skills;
- ensuring that older, more able pupils have opportunities to plan, draft and improve their writing;
- teachers assessing pupils' existing skills in writing and setting targets for the next stage in their development.

(paragraphs 33-38)

- ◆ Monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning more systematically, by:
 - having a particular purpose for monitoring so that the evidence to be gathered is specific;
 - using the evaluation of monitoring evidence to feed directly into the school improvement plan;
 - identifying the steps that need to be taken to improve standards;
 - monitoring more carefully the impact of actions intended to improve aspects of the schools' work, to ensure that they are being successful.

(paragraphs 39-44)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

16

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	1	11	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0	6	69	25	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than six percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	28	192
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	6	59

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	33

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	81

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	14	15	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	12	12
	Girls	14	13	15
	Total	27	25	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (100)	86 (96)	93 (93)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	11	12
	Girls	13	13	15
	Total	26	24	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (100)	83 (100)	93 (78)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	15	15	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	11	13
	Girls	11	11	13
	Total	21	22	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (89)	73 (86)	87 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	12	12
	Girls	14	13	13
	Total	24	25	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (86)	83 (86)	83 (100)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	18
Black – African heritage	20
Black – other	1
Indian	5
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	11
White	101
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	2	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	27

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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£

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	95

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	60
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	220
Number of questionnaires returned	120

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	23	1	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	26	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	29	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	61	26	8	3	1

The teaching is good.	75	25	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	34	5	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	27	6	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	87	13	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	38	12	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	76	22	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	72	25	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	31	16	2	7

Only 19 parents attended the meeting but they were very positive about most aspects of the school's work. They were all happy with the progress their children are making and felt that the school has high expectations for both academic and personal development. They said they are kept well informed about events in school. Some parents said they would like more opportunities to check on their child's progress by being able to look at their books. Reports are of good quality. Staff are friendly and approachable if parents have any concerns, and they sort out any difficulties quickly. The school promotes very positive values, such as caring and respect, and parents felt this was an outstanding strength. Only a few parents help in school, and some parents said they would appreciate more opportunities to be involved. Parents at the meeting were happy with the amount and consistency of homework. In common with some of the parents who returned the questionnaire, those at the meeting said that they are not happy with out of school activities. They are not clear about what activities are offered, or which children are allowed to attend.