



English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103425
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276916
Inspection dates 21 February 2006 to 22 February 2006
Reporting inspector David Rzeznik HMI

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Evelyn Road |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Birmingham |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 | | West Midlands B11 3JW |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0121 4643150 |
| Number on roll | 407 | Fax number | 0121 4642578 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Rev Patrick Gilsenan |
| Date of previous inspection | 23 January 2001 | Headteacher | Mrs Isabel Riley |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

English Martyrs' is a larger than average, voluntary aided Catholic school in Birmingham. The intake is changing, with a decreasing number of Catholic pupils and an increasing proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds joining the school. Most pupils are of Asian heritage, mainly of Pakistani origin. There are a small number of pupils from Black Caribbean, Black African and mixed heritage. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is very high. Five per cent are at the early stages of acquiring English and the number is steadily rising. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and those claiming free school meals are higher than normal. Attainment on entry is below average overall. Pupils' communication, language and literacy, number and calculating skills are significantly below average when they start school

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money. The school judges its effectiveness as better than this. Though leadership and management are satisfactory, weaknesses in the leadership's self-evaluation have led to senior staff having a more generous view of some aspects of provision than the school outcomes warrant. Development planning and monitoring are not always sufficiently analytical or evaluative. Nevertheless, the school has demonstrated that it has the capacity to improve further by improving provision and pupils' progress in Reception.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. They start school with below average skills and make good progress in the Reception Year because of the effective provision. In 2005, standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 were significantly below average. The oldest pupils' progress was good in science and satisfactory in English and mathematics. The more able pupils throughout the school do not always do as well as they can. This is because on occasions work is not demanding enough. Pupils' speaking, vocabulary and comprehension skills require further improvement.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and they say they feel valued and well cared for. As a result, their attitudes to learning, behaviour and personal development are good. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Relationships between pupils and adults from different ethnic backgrounds are very good. Attendance is satisfactory but pupils' punctuality is not good enough.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. Although there are examples of good teaching, there is not enough consistency of practice across the school. Inconsistencies in planning mean work is not always appropriately matched to pupils' needs and abilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly the progress of the more able.
- Improve pupils' speaking, vocabulary and comprehension skills by creating more opportunities for discussion and independent work.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by ensuring planning considers the needs of different abilities so that work provides a sufficient level of challenge to all pupils.
- Strengthen leadership and management through a more rigorous approach to strategic development planning, monitoring and evaluation and further refine the tracking of pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move up through the school. In 2005, standards at the end of Year 6 were significantly below average overall. Pupils' progress was good in science and satisfactory in English and mathematics. Year 2 pupils reached average standards in writing, were below average in mathematics and significantly below in reading. Pupils' progress was good in writing and satisfactory in reading and mathematics. The more able pupils across the school could be doing better with greater challenge. Pupils' listening skills are good but their speaking, vocabulary and comprehension skills require further improvement.

Pupils with statements of special educational needs and those at the early stages of acquiring English make good progress because of the effective support and guidance provided.

Targets for the oldest pupils to achieve are realistic and provide an appropriate level of challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are tolerant and respectful to those from other cultures and differing backgrounds. Pupils say there is very little bullying or racism and isolated incidents are effectively dealt with. Harmonious relationships enable pupils, particularly those who are new, to settle well and quickly make friends. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school because 'there is always something to look forward to'. Pupils are well mannered and polite and their behaviour is good. They enjoy the extra responsibilities they are given in Year 6.

The newly-established school council is giving pupils a voice and their recommendations are having a positive impact on school life, for example by improving play equipment and the level of support provided at break-times. Pupils make a positive contribution to the wider community by raising funds for Rwanda and Red Nose Day. The opportunity for Year 6 pupils to visit the Council House, meet councillors and participate in mock debates helps pupils gain an understanding of the world of work and the responsibilities of adults in the community. There are a number of successful initiatives to encourage pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The regular swimming sessions and input by the specialist physical education (PE) coaching is encouraging pupils to take more exercise.

Attendance is satisfactory, with pupils attending regularly except for when they are ill, when they observe the religious festivals of Eid and Diwali or on limited extended leave of absence with permission. Punctuality is not good enough, with too many late arrivals disrupting the start of the day.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are examples of good practice but this is not consistent throughout the school. The specialist teaching of beginners learning English is effective and this means pupils make good progress, particularly in their listening and speaking skills. Teaching in the Reception Year is effective and pupils' communication and mathematical skills are developing well.

In the most effective lessons, work is pitched at the right level, planning takes account of previous learning and the needs of all pupils are catered for. Good support is provided by teaching assistants and translators so individuals can achieve the lesson objectives and succeed. Explanations and demonstrations are clear and promote learning well. Teachers have a good understanding of the next steps pupils must take to improve. For example, in a good Year 5 mathematics lesson, careful assessment enabled the teacher to tailor tasks well to pupils' needs, resulting in good learning gains. However, in some less effective lessons, planning does not consider the needs of different abilities and the result is insufficient challenge, particularly for the more able. In addition, work is sometimes over-directed by the teacher, with too few opportunities for pupils to talk about things and work independently.

There are inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work. In the best practice, marking is diagnostic and developmental. Comments say why a piece of work is good and guidance on how to improve is given. In some classes, marking is too sparse and unhelpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. It enables pupils to make at least sound progress over time. Provision for pupils in the Reception Year and those with special needs and at an early stage of English acquisition is good. This enables these pupils to make good progress. The science curriculum emphasises investigative work well. Pupils say, 'Science is lots of fun because of the experiments', and they achieve well. The school has purchased new computers and with the improved resources, pupils are beginning to use information and communication technology (ICT) suitably in other subjects.

The curriculum is not fully effective in meeting the needs of the more able and as a result, not enough pupils reach the higher levels in English and mathematics. Opportunities for pupils to develop language skills through paired and group discussions are sometimes missed. Pupils' comprehension and independent skills could be further developed.

A good range of additional activities contributes to pupils' learning and enjoyment. These include choir, computers, cricket and football. Visits to various places of worship

enrich pupils' understanding of different religions. There are successful residential visits for Years 5 and 6 that broaden pupils' horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good care and adequate support and guidance. Good attention is paid to health and safety matters and the school is well maintained, very clean and tidy. Induction arrangements are effective and this means pupils settle well into the Reception routines and new arrivals get off to a good start. Communication with parents is good and information shared regularly so that individuals' personal and social needs are well met. Arrangements for the proper safeguarding of children are sound. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and staff have been appropriately trained. Governors have yet to nominate a designated member to oversee these arrangements.

Support and guidance are good for beginners in English and those with special needs. However, on occasions there is a lack of support for the more able and in some classes marking is not sufficiently diagnostic.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has been successful in creating a caring and welcoming ethos. The leadership has been sensitive to the changing nature of its intake and has put in place a number of suitable policies and procedures to cater better for the needs of the diverse community it serves. As a result, relations between adults and pupils from different backgrounds are very good. The school runs smoothly from day to day and there is sound financial control. The school accumulated a large budget surplus over the past three years. Money was appropriately set aside to pay for major building improvements, additional staffing and computer technology.

The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is satisfactory but not yet robust or systematic enough. This explains why leaders view a number of aspects of its work more favourably than the inspectors. Monitoring of teaching has taken place and strengths and weaknesses have been identified. However, shortcomings in provision are not systematically followed up to see if they have been remedied or not. The school improvement plan is satisfactory but lacks clear, quantifiable success criteria to judge how progress will be evaluated.

The school is beginning to track pupils' progress but the work is in its infancy. Effective use has been made of performance data to set appropriate targets and to inform decisions about intervention. Senior staff do not yet make full use of the information to improve the quality of teaching and planning, or evaluate the progress made by different groups of pupils over time. Governors, although supportive, rely too heavily on the headteacher in holding the school to account and setting the educational direction. They successfully ensure the school fulfils its statutory duties.

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Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | 2 | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | NA |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | NA |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 | NA |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 | NA |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 3 | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | NA |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form | NA |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy | NA |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for looking after us when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and everyone was welcoming and friendly. We liked talking to you about your work, speaking with your teachers and coming into classrooms to see how well you were progressing. Now we want to share with you what we thought about the school.

These are the things we thought were good:

You told us you enjoyed school and there was always something to look forward to when you get there. It was good to hear that science was lots of fun.

Your behaviour is good in class and around the school. Adults and pupils of different backgrounds get on very well.

We really enjoyed meeting the school council and thought it was well run. It was good to see pupils' views being taken notice of.

You and the school premises are well looked after. You said you feel safe, secure and are not bullied or discriminated against.

But we know everyone wants to do better and we have suggested four things the school must act on:

We think you could be doing better in English and mathematics, especially the brightest pupils. We have asked your teachers and governors to check this is happening.

We want you to improve your speaking and vocabulary skills and, in class, have more opportunities to talk and find things out for yourselves.

We want more of your lessons to be good rather than satisfactory and for teachers to better plan to meet your needs and interests.

We want the headteacher, staff and governors to keep an even better check on how the school is doing and where it is going in the future.