



English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118766
LEA Medway
Inspection number 280387
Inspection dates 15 June 2006 to 16 June 2006
Reporting inspector Jacqueline Marshall AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Frindsbury Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Strood
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Rochester, Kent ME2 4JA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 718964
Number on roll	208	Fax number	01634 718964
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Trollope
Date of previous inspection	15 November 1999	Headteacher	Ms Maureen Pearson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

English Martyrs' is an average-sized Catholic primary school. Attainment on entry to the school is below the expected levels for pupils of the same age. A below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above the national average overall, with higher proportions in the current Year 2 and Year 6 classes. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number of pupils have English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good, caring school that provides an effective education for its pupils. The school and the parents agree. Pupils enjoy coming to school, their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and these aspects of personal development, along with their caring attitudes to one another, contribute significantly to their achievements.

Provision in the reception class is good and means children get off to a solid start in their learning from below-average starting points. By the time they enter Year 1 they are reaching the expected levels for their age, and when they leave school at eleven they reach above average standards. All groups of pupils make good progress because teaching is good and work is well matched to pupils' individual needs. Whilst teachers generally give good support and guidance to help pupils to know what to do next to improve, this is not always consistent. Although the curriculum is good and supports learning well, science has been rightly identified by the school as an area to develop further.

Leadership and management of the school are good. Because of the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, all leaders, as well as governors, have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the school has made good progress since the last inspection and has a good capacity to improve further. All leaders and governors contribute to the school's success, although governors and some subject leaders are aware of the need to become even more involved in checking how well the school is doing. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science by making better use of assessment to check how well pupils are doing and to plan lessons that challenge all pupils.
- Continue to raise achievement through a more consistent approach to marking so that pupils always know exactly what they need to do next in their learning to improve.
- Further develop the expertise of the school's leaders in checking and supporting the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils achieve well during their time at the school. Their skills and knowledge as they enter school are below the levels expected for their age, particularly in their language skills and knowledge and understanding of the world. They make good progress so that most are in line with national expectations by the start of Year 1. With good teaching and effective checks on pupils' progress, all groups, regardless of their background or learning difficulties and including the most able, achieve well. This demonstrates steady improvement in the progress made by pupils over the last

three years, particularly in English. Pupils are currently on track to meet the school's challenging targets.

Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensures that pupils achieve well and reached standards slightly above average by the end of Year 2 in 2005. By the time pupils leave the school at eleven they have continued to make good progress to reach above average standards in English and mathematics. Standards in English by the end of Year 6, and the progress pupils made to reach these, were well above expected levels nationally in 2005 as a result of the school's focus on English, and writing in particular. Whilst standards in science have risen recently, they are not as good as in other subjects and raising these is a current focus for the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, a view strongly supported by the vast majority of parents. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. The recently introduced school council enables pupils to raise questions and ideas important to them. They respond well to their responsibilities and their ideas have a real impact on school life, for example, installing a "buddy bench" for the playground, and taking their responsibilities seriously by playing with anyone sitting there.

Pupils behave safely and have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, with many involved in a wide range of after school activities, including sports. They gain a sound economic understanding through the development of their basic skills and involvement in fundraising for local and national charities. Activities such as the Fair Trade project develop work-based learning, although this aspect is less well developed. The school works hard to improve attendance, which is consistently above the national average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is strong and is a key factor in their good behaviour and positive relationships. Pupils' cultural development and understanding of different faiths have improved since the last inspection and are now good because of the focus the school is placing on raising pupils' awareness on the wider world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils enjoy lessons and behaviour is good because they have good relationships with adults and find the work interesting. In the best lessons, teachers regularly share with pupils what they need to do next to improve and activities are carefully planned to motivate and engage pupils. Pupils say learning in these lessons is 'really fun.'

All teachers effectively plan activities for pupils' differing needs and encourage pupils from starting school to become independent learners. Staff are increasingly using information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to enhance learning and motivate pupils further. Effective and challenging questioning encourages pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, to think about their learning and give reasons for their answers. Occasionally lessons lack some of the pace and rigour that characterise the best practice because teachers are less focused on what exactly pupils need to do next to improve. Whilst the quality of marking is good overall, it is not yet consistently successful in showing pupils the next step in their learning.

Teaching assistants effectively support learning of individuals or groups because they know the needs of pupils and adapt their approaches accordingly. Parents are actively encouraged to become involved and support their child's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, enriched curriculum that is planned well. The school has a well considered approach to visits and visitors, which increasingly not only supports classroom learning but fosters pupils' positive attitudes. A strength of the curriculum is the strong focus on music. Pupils have very good musical skills because of good teacher subject knowledge. They really enjoy performing, such as in the Year 1 class assembly during the inspection and the many other opportunities, including the School Proms at the Royal Albert Hall. Staff have received training in the use of ICT so that they can improve further its use to support learning.

The curriculum develops pupils' basic skills well, particularly since the school's focus on developing writing. However, whilst opportunities to develop pupils' investigative skills have recently increased, the school recognises that it needs to work on developing the science curriculum even further. Personal, social and health and citizenship education supports pupils' overall development well.

There is a good emphasis placed on learning through first-hand practical experiences in the Reception class. With the use of the outdoor environment, this is being increasingly extended to the Year 1 and 2 classes and opportunities to promote learning through play are being developed further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school which welcomes all children, whatever their needs, a view held by the overwhelmingly majority of pupils and parents. Child protection and health and safety procedures are well understood and any pupils who are at risk are quickly identified and supported well. Pupils say that relationships within the school are good: "Everyone knows and gets on with each other." As a result, acts of bullying or racism are extremely rare. They know who to turn to if necessary and are clear that the incident will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is well planned and outside agencies and parents are involved effectively.

Procedures for checking pupils' progress are effective and the information gained is used well by teachers when planning further work, providing pupils with challenging targets. Though this is particularly well developed in English and is instrumental in raising achievement, it is not yet secure in science. Right from the start, effective support and guidance is given to pupils with learning difficulties, in particular through targeted support, tracking pupils' progress and liaison with other agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and have successfully maintained and built upon the school's overall effectiveness since the last inspection. The headteacher has successfully built a culture of teamwork within the school since her appointment. All leaders, staff, pupils and parents share the head's clear vision of a school that is constantly striving to improve but where every child is important.

The work of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is a strength of the school. They analyse data and monitor teaching regularly to see where it is best and identify what needs to be improved. Consequently they have a clear understanding of the school's overall effectiveness. They know what is needed to take the school forward and have clearly demonstrated a good capacity to help the school improve further. Whilst not all leaders or governors are as effective yet in checking how well the school is doing, these skills are being steadily developed.

Governors are caring, supportive and fulfil their statutory duties. Whilst they participate in the school improvement process, they are aware they need to become more involved in finding out for themselves how well the school is doing. The school regularly seeks and takes into account the views of parents and other stakeholders, resulting in a very large majority responding positively when asked about the effectiveness of their school.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	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	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	2	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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	2	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 talking to us and showing us your work when we visited your school. We are pleased to hear that you really like school and that the grown-ups are very kind and look after you well. We think that they are good at helping you to know just what you have to do to keep safe and healthy. We were happy to hear that there are plenty of things for you to enjoy at playtimes and exciting things to take part in, such as the Art exhibition, many different musical workshops and your various clubs. We think you are very polite to adults and behave well in and around your school!

In order to make your learning even better, we have asked the adults at your school to:

make sure that teachers are helping you to know how well you are doing, especially in your science

make sure that teachers are consistently helping you to know what you need to do to improve your work

keep checking exactly what the school does best and what could be better.

Thank you again for helping us with our work.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Marshall Lead inspector