



English Martyrs Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 100962
Local Authority Tower Hamlets
Inspection number 285931
Inspection date 7 March 2007
Reporting inspector Mary Summers

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Mark Street
School category	Voluntary aided		London
Age range of pupils	3–11		E1 8DJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7709 0182
Number on roll (school)	192	Fax number	020 7680 9395
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter Edwards
		Headteacher	Miss B Nugent
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school serves an ethnically and socially diverse area within the Diocese of Westminster. Most pupils who attend live in the local community although a significant number travel daily from outside the Parish. More than half are White British, Irish or from other white families and the remainder represent a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Just under half are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to school is average but the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

English Martyrs is an outstanding school which enables pupils to achieve extremely well and reach excellent standards. This is due to a number of successful features, including strong and effective leadership, extremely good teaching and excellent levels of individual care and support for pupils. The school evaluates its performance as good rather than outstanding, but is simply too modest in its assessment.

Children receive a good start in the Nursery as a result of good teaching. They build upon these firm foundations as they move through the school. Virtually all pupils reach nationally expected levels in the national tests and assessments at Years 2 and 6 and a high proportion exceed these levels, especially in mathematics. Pupils quickly learn that teachers expect them to do their best. They enjoy the challenges their teachers set, take an active part in lessons and approach their tasks with diligence. They work very well in small groups, discussing activities and sharing ideas and opinions. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are polite, welcoming and extremely proud of their school. These skills prepare them very well for the future.

All pupils are able to take a full part in school life because of the excellent support systems in place to help them overcome any disadvantages they might have. Less confident pupils are supported very successfully by the learning mentor, who also works with small groups to help them understand the importance of sharing, working together and respecting others. Pupils with learning difficulties receive extremely well-planned and organised support, enabling them to reach nationally expected levels, a tremendous achievement for many of them. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also receive excellent levels of help and reach high standards.

Teaching is dynamic, exciting and well-resourced. A wide range of techniques including computer technology, are used to engage pupils' interest and attention. Their progress is checked regularly and teachers use this information well to plan work at different levels to meet individual needs. The curriculum is well organised. Pupils receive a rich variety of experiences that enable them to reach high academic standards but also ensure they develop their creativity and imagination through art and music. Firm links with local businesses support pupils' academic and personal development very successfully.

The headteacher and deputy form a strong leadership team. There is a clear vision for improvement, based upon an accurate analysis of performance. Staff are well deployed to ensure they have the maximum impact. The governing body provides a valuable resource to the school in terms of individual expertise. However, it does not have clearly established strategies to monitor and evaluate the curriculum and the school improvement plan. Nevertheless, the school operates very effectively and provides excellent value for money. The vast majority of parents are extremely happy with the school's work. As one parent noted on a questionnaire, 'I am very impressed with the quality of teaching and the care given to my children. I have nothing but praise for the headteacher and the school.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Formalise systems to help the governing body monitor the curriculum and school improvements more closely.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

By the end of their Reception year, most children reach nationally expected goals in all areas of learning. Many exceed the targets in mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. This represents good progress, considering that many are still developing confidence and fluency in English.

Pupils build upon this good groundwork in Years 1 to 6. Standards gained in national tests and assessments in Years 2 and 6 have been significantly higher than in other schools for the last three years. Virtually all pupils reach the levels expected for their age in English, mathematics and science. This shows the success of the school's strategies for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language. More able pupils also achieve well, especially in mathematics in Year 6 where two thirds of the pupils attained the highest level in 2006. The school sets high targets for pupils to achieve and they rise to this challenge extremely well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils write sensitively about their feelings in poems and stories, and use the Prayer Garden well as a place for peace and reflection. Attendance is above average. Pupils enjoy lessons very much, responding eagerly to teachers' questions and listening carefully to one another's ideas. They are eager to work independently and do so maturely, as for example in Year 6, when they carried out investigations into chemical changes. Working together helps them develop good levels of co-operation and understanding. These skills, along with very high literacy and numeracy levels, prepare them very well for life beyond school.

Pupils are immensely proud of their school. School councillors take their roles extremely seriously and feel that their views are valued. They note the improvements they have accomplished in gaining larger portions of school meals and extending equipment in the playground. Submitting applications for funds, for example from the Youth Opportunities Fund, help them to gain a basic understanding of business and finance. Pupils feel very safe, confident in the knowledge that problems are dealt with quickly. In developing excellent healthy lifestyles, most choose healthy options in school and participate enthusiastically in sports activities in and out of school time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers share warm and sensitive relationships with their pupils. As a result, pupils feel confident and are not afraid to ask for help. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, for example, a few pupils noted that they did not yet feel confident in using protractors and the teacher reassured them by arranging to spend time with them later, to help them further.

Teachers' expectations are high. They plan very challenging work for pupils with different needs and use classroom assistants effectively to support any pupils who find the work difficult. More able pupils are stimulated and extended effectively because teachers set demanding tasks for them and projects to promote independent learning.

The combination of positive relationships and appropriately challenging and interesting work means that pupils seldom become bored. They are diligent and enthusiastic learners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum, including that for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is excellent. It provides a wide range of interesting and stimulating experiences for pupils to develop their academic and personal skills. The use of the outdoor environment, an area for development highlighted at the last inspection, now provides a wealth of opportunities for the youngest children to develop in all aspects of their learning.

Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced constantly in other subjects. They write accurate reports of science investigations and compile data about their findings, as well as composing poems about Jesus' feelings in the wilderness, as part of their work in religious education. Art work around the school is of high quality and shows pupils' creative talents in using a variety of media.

Pupils' learning is enhanced well by links with volunteers from local businesses in the City, who visit weekly to support pupils. Other visitors help pupils understand how to keep safe, for example on the roads and when using London Transport. A recycling project helps pupils understand the importance of looking after their local environment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides excellent care, guidance and support for pupils. It is a carefully ordered, safe environment in which every pupil is well known and individual needs are catered for closely. Academic development is tracked very effectively through meticulous records which highlight areas in which pupils need further support. Teachers then plan carefully to ensure that pupils can fill these gaps in their learning.

Additional help given by the school's support teachers and assistants means that pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language make excellent progress. These staff provide an extremely well-planned service and are one of the main reasons why overall standards are consistently high.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school is led and managed extremely well by a dedicated team of senior staff and governors. Performance is analysed carefully to identify where improvements can be made and actions taken to ensure that these areas are addressed successfully. For example, analysis of the achievements of Reception children revealed that they should be performing better in communication, language and literacy, and curriculum plans were subsequently adapted. It is too soon to see the effect of these innovations although early signs are encouraging.

Resources are used very effectively to provide a high quality service. As one parent noted on her questionnaire, 'Staff go above and beyond their duties when teaching the pupils.' They think nothing of devoting time during lunchtime or after school to help individual pupils and parents.

The governing body provides a stable and very useful source of support for the school's work. Individual expertise is drawn upon effectively when, for example, compiling the school profile, overseeing premises projects and monitoring the school budget. Governors' monitoring procedures are too informal, however, for them to be able to check carefully that policies and school improvement plans are actually happening in practice.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all so much for your very warm welcome and for sharing with me your views about the school. I really enjoyed my day, visiting classrooms to watch you learning, looking at your work and chatting with you in the playground. Special thanks must go to the members of the school council who gave me a great deal of information which helped me reach my final conclusions. Everything I saw and heard convinced me that you go to an outstanding school.

These are the things that I thought were especially good.

- You all work very hard and achieve really well - the standards you reach in national tests and assessments are much higher than in most schools.
- You are growing up as confident, polite, well-behaved young people who enjoy learning and know how to keep safe and healthy.
- Teachers and other adults take excellent care of you and give you help if you need it.
- Adults listen to your ideas so you can help to make school a better place for everybody.
- The people in charge of your school know exactly what they need to do to make it even better.

There is one thing that I think the people in charge could do to make your school even better.

- Governors need to check a little more closely on what is happening in school and how it is improving.

I know you will continue to work hard and support your teachers and other adults so that they can help you do your very best at school.

Yours faithfully,

Mary SummersLead inspector