



# English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104931  
**Local Authority** Sefton  
**Inspection number** 287069  
**Inspection date** 31 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Margot D'Arcy

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	School Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Litherland, Liverpool
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		Merseyside L21 7LX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 9285601
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	411	<b>Fax number</b>	0151 9283570
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Bernadette Coxon
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pat O'Brien
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 September 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This larger than average school, situated six miles from the city centre of Liverpool, serves an area of high unemployment. Pupils come from a wide range of family circumstances. The vast majority are White British and only a very small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion with special educational needs is broadly average. Children begin Nursery with well below average standards, particularly in communication and aspects of personal and social development. The school has been awarded the ArtsMark Gold status, Sports England ActiveMark Gold, Healthy Schools Standard and gained the Quality Mark from the Basic Skills Agency three times.

## 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. It enables pupils to reach well above average standards by the time they leave Year 6 and achieve high standards of personal development. This is due to inspirational leadership from the headteacher, extremely effective senior managers and a highly talented and committed teaching team. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, commenting that their children flourish both academically and socially. Parents particularly appreciate the caring, family ethos and the way in which the school involves them so much in its life and their children's education. The comment, 'Once you're part of this school, you don't want to let go', reflects the views of many. Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage where everything that happens becomes a valuable learning experience. Meticulous organisation of the environment stimulates children's curiosity and eagerness to learn. Adults intervene purposefully in children's play, exploiting every possible learning opportunity. Excellent work habits are cultivated here, including the incredible independence and involvement of pupils throughout the school in their own education. This really singles this school out from the crowd and unquestionably intensifies learning and underpins pupils' outstanding achievement. However, whilst Foundation Stage staff make the best possible use of the outdoor environment, this aspect of the accommodation is not of the same high standard as other parts of the school. Consequently, opportunities available to children to make choices about their work outdoors are restricted, particularly those in Reception. The school is aware of this and plans are underway to improve the accommodation. Pupils appreciate the exceptional quality of teaching and learning experiences they receive and the very high standard of care and guidance they are given. This is seen in their excellent attitudes to learning, enjoyment of school, and mature view of the importance of education. The school is very successful in preparing pupils for the future and for making a valuable contribution to society. 'I want to be an archaeologist' said one Year 6 pupil; another, seven-year-old, explained 'I want to make television programmes about art so that children all over the world can be good at it'. In this school, pupils' achievements and aspirations know no bounds because they are shown that they can succeed. Pupils are fully included in the learning process, with their views being constantly sought and acted upon. They regularly evaluate their work and the quality of lessons; 'teachers listen to what we think', explained one pupil. This element of practice feeds the drive to provide the best for pupils and is insisted upon by the headteacher who tells teachers, 'If the children think they've sat on the carpet too long - they have', and 'If the children don't understand something - find another way of teaching it'. The rich and challenging learning experiences provided by teachers reflect their expert subject knowledge and understanding of pupils as individuals, including their particular learning styles. Rigorous assessment is built into all lessons and used very well to set pupils improvement targets. Pupils know these and are given excellent feedback, both verbally and through detailed marking, on how well they are doing and how they might improve. The stimulating curriculum provides outstanding opportunities to promote pupils' academic and personal development. For instance, they have a very good understanding of what it means to live healthily and keep safe.

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels, with everyone in the school playing their part in its success. The headteacher pulls it all together, however, through her unstinting drive to continually improve things and her expertise in 'making things happen'. Innovation is a hallmark of the school. Projects and research initiatives, such as those to promote Foundation Stage children's independent use of information and communication technology (ICT) and boys' writing through digital imagery (film) are embraced, but only if they are considered to be of benefit to pupils. Strong links with other schools and outside agencies harness all the expertise and experience available to provide the best for pupils. This is a school that knows its strengths but is never complacent and, therefore, has outstanding capacity to improve even further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve provision for outdoor learning in the Foundation Stage so that opportunities for independent learning are maximised and match the outstanding quality of provision made by the school in all other aspects of this phase of education.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Children flourish in the Foundation Stage and make very good progress. This continues in Years 1 and 2 so that pupils attain average standards by the time they begin Year 3. There is no let up in the rate of progress during Years 3 to 6, resulting in standards being well above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. All groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well. This is because the school's rigorous approach to assessment, and analysis of every pupil's progress, ensures that any hint of underachievement is spotted early and addressed. A good example is the improvement in boys' writing, in response to the intensive and continuing focus on providing them with stimulating and challenging work. This is matched well to their interests and creatively linked to ICT. Pupils also achieve exceptionally well and attain high standards in work seen in ICT, art, music and physical education.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strengthens their high standards in this area. The value that the school places on every individual instils in pupils that they are successful learners who are not afraid to tackle challenges. They try exceptionally hard with their work and take immense pride in it; indeed, the quality is outstanding. Behaviour and relationships are excellent. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and racism, and know how to deal with it. The school provides a wide range of opportunities to make up for pupils' limited first-hand experience of living in a multicultural society. Engaging in music and dance from around the world, visiting specialist food markets for ingredients to cook dishes

from different countries, and visiting various places of worship, are just a few of the things that help pupils gain a good understanding of cultures different to their own. Pupils have a significant say in the way their school is run and are active in contributing to good causes, both locally and in the wider world. Pupils' excellent attendance shows how much they enjoy school, but it goes further than this: pupils love their school; as one commented, 'the only thing I would change is to make it into a high school so that we would never have to leave'.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers' subject expertise is clearly evident as they explain new ideas, and question and challenge pupils. Effortlessly, it seems, they promote individual, class or year group targets, both academic and personal, as they teach. Learning moves along at a staggering pace. Yet, while the atmosphere is charged with excitement, there is an amazing air of calm as pupils focus intently on their work. Classrooms are organised meticulously to support learning, and planning is highly detailed. Both take very good account of pupils' different needs and styles of learning and ensure equal opportunities for all. A strength that stands out across the school is the polished and professional way ICT is used as a teaching tool and for pupils to investigate and record their work. Teamwork is exceptional. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with teachers to ensure that work for pupils who find learning difficult is tailored to their needs. Teaching assistants are very much a part of the team and provide high quality support for groups and individuals.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of all pupils very well. It provides them with a wealth of rich learning experiences and is central to their outstanding academic and personal achievements. Planning to promote basic skills is thorough and innovative; it captures pupils' interest and imagination. For instance, not only is pupils' achievement in geography enhanced through the theme of 'Mountains and Explorers', judicious use of the film 'Shackleton' stirs them to produce perceptive writing and enhances their understanding of personal qualities, such as endurance. Subject links are carefully thought through so that, for example, music skills are reinforced in numeracy lessons as teachers 'call out' calculations and pupils respond in the same way with their answers. The use of ICT across the curriculum, and the promotion of key literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, prepares pupils very well for the future. A good range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to pursue their interests and talents. Further enrichment is provided through the teaching of modern foreign languages and the very good range of visits that are planned to support learning.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

Exemplary systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress and involving them fully in evaluating their own learning underpin outstanding achievement. Similarly, the school goes all out to involve parents in their children's learning, providing courses and workshops to ensure that both home and school use the same methods. Reading diaries in Year 6 reflect the extent of the school's success in maintaining parental involvement, containing regular, in depth dialogue between teachers, pupils and parents. The specialised programme to promote pupils' social and emotional development is very successful and helps them deal with issues such as anger management, accepting differences, and developing empathy. The learning mentor plays a key role here, co-ordinating the provision and working with small groups or individuals where necessary. As one pupil explained, 'she helps you sort out your problems and teaches you how not to get involved in trouble'. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully in place.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The school is led outstandingly well by the headteacher, whose commitment to excellence and dedication to the pupils is evident in all aspects of school life. Ensuring pupils achieve their academic potential and develop into well-rounded individuals is what this school is about. This is not just a well-intentioned vision, however, but an irrefutable reality. A strong team of senior managers brings a wide range of expertise and adds much to the excellent way that the school is led and managed. The drive to improve is ever constant and is fuelled by rigorous self-evaluation. Governors too add to this picture of excellence and rise well to the test of challenging this successful school through their high level of involvement and wide-ranging experience. Although the school had no points for improvement from its last inspection, there is no doubt that it has moved on. It continues to go from strength to strength, providing excellent value for money.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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 for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed my day very much and the chance to talk with some of you about what it is like to be a pupil at English Martyrs'. You were understandably very keen to know what I thought about your school and may remember me telling you that I would write you a personal letter to let you know my findings. There are so many very good things about your school that it is difficult to pick out just a few or to think of enough 'wow' words to describe them all! (I'm sure you have an endless bank of these by now and could help me out). I was particularly impressed with your brilliant behaviour and how tremendously well you all get on together. You put so much effort and hard work into your lessons not only learning new things but also afterwards in evaluating how well you've done and how you could do even better! Your achievements are really remarkable. I loved the examples of your writing the poems were so moving and your artwork was amazing. Year 2 pupils' understanding of pitch was incredible, as was Year 5's use of ICT. The other thing I really couldn't get over was how wonderfully well you present your work do keep this up because you are right to be proud of it. The assembly by Year 5 and 6 pupils was a magnificent celebration of their work on books and allowed me to see the confidence and talent many of you have to perform in front of an audience. Of course, whilst you all do so well, I know you realise that Mrs O'Brien, your teachers and all the staff and governors play their part. I was impressed with the exciting and challenging lessons teachers provide for you and how carefully they mark your work and give you feedback on it. All staff work hard and care for you very much. Your headteacher is always thinking of ways to make things better for you and involves everyone, including you, in decisions to improve the school. Your school is currently working on plans to improve the outdoor area for children in the Foundation Stage. I think this is a really good idea because, at the moment, the accommodation means that children do not have as wide a choice as they could about the work they do outside their classrooms. Thank you once again for helping me with the inspection. Continue to work hard and do your best to keep English Martyrs an outstanding school.