

English Martyrs Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108256
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	288053
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen House
Headteacher	Mr Bernard Martin
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2002
School address	Dewsbury Road Wakefield West Yorkshire WF2 9DD
Telephone number	01924 303635
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size school serves a mixed area and its pupils are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. There is a below average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with statements for special educational need. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average and few speak English as an additional language. English Martyrs is an Investor in People and also holds the Activemark award.

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 and improving school, which places great emphasis on its pupils achieving well. Indeed, their personal development is outstanding and by the end of Year 6 they also reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is good overall. Parents have the highest regard for the education the school provides for their children. One parental comment aptly sums up their views: 'Our children are getting a well-rounded education and making great progress in a caring and supportive environment.'

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children receive a solid start to their school careers in Nursery and Reception, and although space is limited, teachers and teaching assistants work hard and effectively to provide their charges with exciting things to do. Continued good teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 and very effective support for pupils who sometimes experience difficulties with their work in class lead to pupils making good progress in their learning. However, more able pupils in Key Stage 2 are not always challenged enough to reach the standards of which they are capable.

The school's creative curriculum and the many opportunities pupils have to collaborate with and support each other ensure that they enjoy school and take full advantage of all it offers. However, the school does not make full use of new technology to ensure that pupils have the best possible range of learning opportunities.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around school is excellent and they welcome visitors and new pupils warmly. The school council plays an important role in making sure that the pupil voice is heard and that leaders listen to it. Members make perceptive suggestions as to how the school may be improved even more and they take the lead in the wide range of charitable appeals which pupils support with pleasure. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultures and religions different to their own is very impressive and they have received national recognition and critical acclaim for their work in the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) Peru initiative. The classrooms and corridors are adorned with a vibrant display of pupils' writing, drawing and painting. Music and drama are integral parts of the life of the school and the Year 6 rehearsal for their final play before they leave was a joy to visit.

Pupils are well aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and they take part in sporting activities with gusto. They feel safe in school and know that the adults with whom they come into contact care for their well-being. Such is the good quality of support they receive, pupils of all levels of ability, including those identified as vulnerable, benefit from all the school offers them. Their progress is monitored on a regular basis but the use of assessment data, to inform pupils of how they can improve and thus raise standards further, is not consistent in all years.

The headteacher leads the school with the utmost clarity and sensitivity. He leads by example and he has the full support of a most capable staff and of a governing body which both supports the school and challenges it when necessary. The school's evaluation of its performance is mostly accurate and leaders have a clear vision of what is needed to bring about further improvement. English Martyrs is most certainly a school in which every individual, child or adult, really does matter.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide consistent challenge for more able pupils in Key Stage 2 in order that they reach the highest standards of which they capable.

- Ensure a more consistent approach to the use of assessment data to raise standards and achievement.
- Ensure pupils use new technology fully in order to maximise learning opportunities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From broadly average standards on entry to the Nursery, pupils make good progress across the school and reach above average standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve particularly well in the development of their speaking and listening skills because of the many opportunities they have to work in groups. Moreover, the wide range of exciting activities in both Nursery and Reception teach them to work and play together with a maturity which belies their years.

Good progress is maintained across Years 1 and 2 and pupils' skills and confidence in both reading and writing develop well. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for example, they showed this by producing some perceptive questions to ask about the age of dinosaurs, such as 'How do we know about Tyrannosaurus Rex?' In Key Stage 2, attainment has improved year on year since the time of the previous inspection and the test results in 2007 were the best in the school's history. However, a below average percentage of pupils reach the higher National Curriculum Level 5, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their peers because of the effective support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and underpins the work of the school. The school has an overriding commitment to the well-being of the whole child and this is an important part of its ethos. Indeed, pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school, of which they are so proud.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding.

The school lives out the words of its mission statement, being 'a loving community', and spirituality is felt in all aspects of its life, including relationships, colourful artwork, thought-provoking assemblies and the wider curriculum. Behaviour is impeccable because teachers encourage their pupils to take responsibility for their own conduct. The school council has a high profile and expresses the views of pupils with skill and confidence. Pupils are very knowledgeable about other cultures and have a profound awareness of religious traditions from Britain and around the world. They also have a national reputation for their charitable work through the CAFOD Peru project.

Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and exercise and the school has been awarded the Active Mark as a result of its work in these areas. Pupils feel safe in school and show impressive respect and care for others. Good achievement in the core subjects and the many opportunities pupils have to plan and finance school activities stand them in good stead for life after formal education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching results in pupils having very positive attitudes in lessons and helps them develop their skills as independent learners well. As a result, they make good progress and reach above average standards. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but the level of challenge for more able pupils is inconsistent across Key Stage 2 and these pupils do not always attain at their full potential. Nonetheless, teachers demonstrate very secure subject knowledge and most lessons proceed at a lively pace and engage the interests of pupils well. Teachers use electronic whiteboards effectively as a teaching aid. The talented team of teaching assistants provides very effective support for pupils who sometimes find the work difficult and as a result these youngsters can take full benefit of what each lesson has to offer. Pupils are very positive about all the adults who support them and comment, 'They are so kind to us and are always helpful when we get stuck!' The quality of marking is inconsistent and varies from exemplary practice comprising detailed advice on how pupils can improve their work to little more than a comment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features and it reflects the school's priorities of encouraging responsible citizenship within a caring community. The priority to develop pupils' skills in literacy across the curriculum is well supported by the emphasis on speaking, listening and drama. However, the use of new technology across subjects is underdeveloped and this limits pupils' learning opportunities. Moreover, the lack of accommodation in the Foundation Stage limits the space for outdoor play and pupils' physical development.

The school has made very good progress in developing the non-core subjects, the provision for which was graded unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. There is now a thematic and creative approach to these subjects, which is further enriched by the teaching of French and by an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. Sport looms large and there is an impressive variety of educational trips. Visiting artists, musicians and dramatists from a range of cultural traditions, including the school's Catholic heritage, make an important contribution to pupils' cultural awareness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils are well cared for in a happy, welcoming learning environment, which demonstrates the school's aspiration of 'love, learn and be secure.' Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are excellent and based on mutual trust and respect. Pupils say that their teachers and teaching assistants really care for them and that they feel safe and secure, knowing there is always someone to turn to if they have any worries. Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and the Child and Family Support Worker gives valuable advice to the more vulnerable pupils and their families. As a result, all pupils are fully included in all that the school has to offer and most make good and sometimes better progress in all areas of school life. Procedures for child

protection are in place and the vast majority of parents are very pleased with the levels of care and support their offspring receive.

Pupils' progress is tracked regularly, but the use of data to set appropriate targets and to raise standards even further is inconsistent across the school. Most pupils know how well they are doing but are sometimes less aware of what they need to do to reach higher standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The headteacher's strong analytical and management skills are major factors in shaping the clear vision and direction of the school. He is well supported by talented senior leaders and by committed teachers and teaching assistants, for whom teamwork and shared responsibility are bywords. Governors are incisive critical friends and offer impressive support for the school, evident in the work-life balance review and in the staff coaching sessions led by the chairperson. The school ethos strongly encourages pupils' proficiency in basic skills, but also seeks to develop their creativity and imagination; the Year 4 Poem Wall, for example. Senior leaders and subject coordinators carefully monitor the quality of teaching and learning and improvements in standards and achievement are vigorously pursued. As a result, attainment is rising and pupils are very proud of their achievements in all areas of school life. However, leaders recognise that more able pupils are not always challenged appropriately to reach the higher National Curriculum levels and, although improving, the use of assessment data to raise standards further is not consistent in all years.

The school serves the local, national and global community very well and supports a wide range of charities. It also has very strong links with a range of primary and secondary schools. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about what it is doing for their offspring. As they say, 'The school is a caring and supportive environment which places emphasis on both the academic and emotional aspects of our children's development.' The strengths in leadership, the ongoing improvement in standards and pupils' outstanding personal development demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Inspection of English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Wakefield,
WF2 9DD

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We would now like to tell you the really good things about your school.

English Martyrs is a good school and we know you are all very proud of it! The standards you reach in all your subjects are above average and you make good progress in your learning. Your behaviour is excellent and you try so hard to support each other when you are finding things difficult. You benefit from good teaching and your teachers and teaching assistants look after you well and are very proud of you all. You know a lot about other cultures and have many opportunities to take part in musical activities and dance. Sport, games and educational visits are important parts of life at English Martyrs and we saw Year 6 with smiles on their faces going out to another school for the touch rugby competition! Your marvellous work for charity is very well known and we were very pleased to see that some of your writing as part of the CAFOD Peru project has been published and is now used by children in other schools across the country.

In order to make your school even better we have asked your headteacher and all the other staff to challenge the quicker learners even more in lessons so that you all reach the highest standards you can. We consider your opportunities to use new technology across different subjects could be stronger. We also think it would be a good idea if teachers took an even closer look at how well you are doing so that they know how to push you just that little bit further in your learning!

Thank you again for what you did to help make the inspection successful. Please keep working hard and make sure you try your best in everything you do.