



# English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 110004  
**Local Authority** Reading  
**Inspection number** 298918  
**Inspection dates** 6–7 March 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Wiola Hola HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Dee Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Tilehurst
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Reading RG30 4BE
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 9015466
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	307	<b>Fax number</b>	0118 9015467
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Catherine Woodhouse
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Geraldine Lindley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 September 2005		

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## **Introduction**

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

## **Description of the school**

The school is larger than average. Most of the pupils are from white British or Irish backgrounds but a significant minority of pupils come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportions of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities are below the national averages. A lower than average percentage of pupils have English as an additional language; this has increased in the last year. When the school was inspected in September 2005, it was judged to require special measures.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education and has some good features. It has improved. Achievement has been restored to satisfactory and is moreover showing signs of improving further. Standards are average and rising. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The good features present at the time of the inspection in September 2005 have been maintained. These are in pupils' personal development, in the quality of relationships throughout the school and in the care, guidance and support pupils receive. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils show respect and courtesy as well as liveliness and enjoyment of school. Most pupils are confident speakers because this is encouraged from an early age. School Council members, for example, are a credit to the school. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage has improved; it is satisfactory with good features in helping children to develop their language and communication skills. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. It includes a very wide range of extra-curricular activities that pupils enjoy greatly. The school has rightly been placing an emphasis on literacy and numeracy over the last year and a half. Other subjects are covered but some rather thinly; subject leaders are now in a position where they can act to improve the quality of those where there are relative weaknesses, primarily in information and communication technology (ICT), art, and design technology. The school has worked successfully to improve teaching and learning; they are satisfactory overall and include much good work. Nevertheless, there is still some variability and the school is working well to bring all lessons up to the quality of the best. Teachers have developed well their understanding and use of attainment data and now keep a close track of pupils' progress. Most teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' levels of attainment and provide work that is suitably challenging. Sometimes work set is not demanding enough or is undertaken with slow pace.

Leadership and management are good. The school knows itself extremely well because so much good work has taken place to secure accurate school self-evaluation. School improvement has been sustained in spite of changes at senior level; the headteacher, deputy head, consultant headteacher and now the acting headteacher have all made positive contributions. Governors, senior leaders and middle managers have developed their effectiveness well and operate within robust systems of accountability. Systems for keeping the school under review are now highly rigorous. The school has good capacity to improve.

### What the school should do to improve further

\* Raise the overall quality of teaching and learning so that in all lessons pupils work with good pace on tasks that are suitably challenging.\* Strengthen the work of some subject leaders to ensure that all curriculum areas are covered at depth, learning and pupils' enjoyment are enhanced, and standards raised overall.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Children in the reception class make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. They are able to explain their ideas fully in sentences. They listen well to adults and each other. Children's work and activity show that most of them can do what is expected for their ages.

Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2006 were broadly average overall, having risen from 2005. Results in writing improved significantly due to an increased focus on this. Results in reading, however, continued to decline although the percentage of pupils achieving the highest level was higher than in 2005. In mathematics, test results were significantly higher than the national average. The national test results in 2006 for Year 6 pupils improved significantly from 2005. In all three core subjects the percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected level for Year 6 was greater than nationally. However, the percentages attaining the highest levels, although showing an improvement from the previous year, were still less than average. With the exception of reading in Year 2, the school generally met its targets representing satisfactory progress for most pupils. Pupils' current work in lessons in Years 1 to 6 shows that pupils are generally making at least satisfactory progress. Some pupils are making good progress and this is linked to the good quality of teaching and learning in some lessons. Reliable attainment information held by the school shows that the rate of pupils' progress is increasing.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school's work in this area continues to be strong. Children in the reception class settle quickly and follow the well established routines. They work with enjoyment and security and are calm and sociable. In other years, with a few exceptions, pupils' behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are confident, courteous and helpful to each other, staff and visitors: the adults in the school provide very good role models. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and their lessons, because they feel safe, enjoy the variety of learning experiences they are offered and rise to challenge when it is provided. This enjoyment is reflected in the slightly above average attendance levels. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good, in response to the many opportunities they are given to reflect on matters of deeper significance. This happens not only in assembly, but also in lessons. Cultural development is good and fostered well through music but less so through art, for example. Through the School Council and other activities, pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They are prepared well for their next stages in education. They are very well aware of how to lead healthy lives.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching has improved and is now satisfactory overall, enabling pupils to make steady progress as they move through the school. Teaching and learning, however, range from outstanding to satisfactory. Teaching is often characterised by the setting of challenging and interesting work, very good relationships between pupils and teachers and, where the technology is available, helpful use of interactive whiteboards and digital projectors. Many teachers question pupils effectively. They encourage pupils to work with their 'talk partners' which enables them to share their understanding and ideas. Teaching assistants work effectively with individuals and groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is a second language. In some lessons, expectations of what particular groups of pupils can achieve are low or the pace of learning is slow. Teachers plan well and value the school's helpful guidance on how to structure lessons and bring clarity of purpose to learning. Teachers are reflective and review the effectiveness of their work. They respond positively to advice proffered and seek constantly to improve.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with a number of strong aspects. The school provides well for pupils' personal development, through visits, residential journeys and through the Catholic life of the school. Extra-curricular provision is excellent. Provision for English and mathematics has been broadened to encompass a good range of learning styles and experiences. Pupils' progress in English and mathematics has been speeded up in Years 3 to 6 with the use of small classes, arranged according to pupils' ability, and also through additional 'booster lessons'. Most subjects are taught to a satisfactory depth but some, particularly art, design and technology and ICT, are covered rather thinly. Pupils have many good opportunities to learn about healthy living. They benefit from being taught French in Years 3 to 6. Work is generally planned effectively to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. Preparation for transfer to secondary schools is carefully organised and helpful.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff know the pupils very well. Pupils are happy to turn to adults for help knowing they will be listened to and action taken as needed. Class and school councils provide pupils with a means of having their voices heard and acted upon. Rare instances of bullying are quickly resolved. Pupils' safety is secured at all times. Good improvements have been made to child protection procedures. Staff are now fully trained, a helpful pamphlet has been issued to parents and carers, and

important documentation is held securely. The school works closely with external agencies to support some pupils as necessary. For example, expert guidance on assessment and support for pupils for whom English is a second language has improved provision for them. The school has developed good systems through which it checks pupils' progress in English and mathematics; underachievement is easily identified and action taken when necessary. Pupils' generally know their targets for learning although in some classes these are presented in very broad outline only. Communication with parents about their children's progress and standards both informally and formally is good.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management, including governance, are good and have improved greatly since September 2005. Leaders and managers at all levels have adopted a thorough and honest approach to school evaluation and one that results in an accurate assessment of the school's strengths and areas of improvement based on secure evidence.

Over the last year, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked together very closely. This has stood the school in very good stead because the deputy has been able to take charge effectively during the headteacher's absences on sick leave. The recently appointed acting headteacher, seconded from another school, has brought a valuable external perspective and, in a short time, she has successfully refined and built upon the good school improvement initiatives already in place. Senior and middle managers have grown in understanding about how to discharge their roles within what is now an extremely robust system of accountability centred on ensuring that all pupils make at least the progress than can be expected of them. The school's systems for keeping pupils' progress under review are good. They are used well for analysing not just individuals' progress but that of whole groups or sub-groups of pupils. The effectiveness of subject leaders in developing and promoting work in their allotted subjects is very variable. Pupils' work shows that outcomes in art, ICT and design technology are the least well developed. The school has rightly and understandably placed a focus on restoring pupils' satisfactory progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

Governors have increased their effectiveness. They have engaged in training to understand more fully their crucial role as critical friends to the school. They now hold the school to account very well and have demonstrated their capacity to take difficult decisions where necessary. Governors, with the acting headteacher, and with help from the local authority, are seeking to reduce a deficit budget. They have been effective in securing the services of consultant or acting headteachers, as necessary, in order to drive forward key aspects of school improvement. The local authority has provided valuable support in a number of ways, most notable in raising the overall quality of provision for literacy and numeracy. The school has good capacity to improve.

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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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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>	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	1
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	3
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**

As you know, inspectors visited your school recently. I write to thank you for your welcome and help when we talked with you and looked at your work. We were pleased to have a chance to talk with members of the School Council. We found that the school has improved greatly since September 2005 and no longer needs additional help because staff have worked so well to ensure that you are now making satisfactory progress.

These are the best things about your school: \* You are confident, courteous and helpful to each other, staff and visitors. You behave extremely well and support one another. \* Teachers and helpers take very good care of you so that you feel safe and happy. \* The teachers keep a very close check on how well you are doing in English and mathematics; they give you extra help if you need it so that no one gets left behind. \* You have a great many extra clubs and activities that you enjoy. \* You are confident speakers because you are encouraged to explain your ideas from an early age. \* The school leaders are extremely clear about what the school does well and what can be improved further. They are working well to make the school as good as it can possibly be.

Here are the main things the school should do to improve further: \* It should make sure that there are even more good lessons in which you all work with good pace on tasks that make you think hard. \* Some subjects are covered rather thinly and these need to be developed so that you learn more about them. In particular, you should be doing more in art, ICT and design and technology. These and other subjects could be linked together better so that you see connections between them.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy coming to this school. It shows every sign of continuing to improve.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Wiola Holaher Majesty's Inspector