

English Martyrs' RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108503
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	309712
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Gianna Ulyatt

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	468
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Thomas Laidler
Headteacher	Mrs Denise Kendall
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Beaufront Gardens Fenham Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 2SA
Telephone number	0191 274 7463
Fax number	0191 274 9197

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is above average in size and is situated in an urban community. Pupils who attend come from a range of backgrounds; levels of social deprivation are above average and increasing. Many pupils travel substantial distances to attend the school. There is an uneven gender balance with 54% of pupils being male. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and there is a below average percentage of pupils from minority ethnic families. The number of pupils whose first language is not English and who are at an early stage of language acquisition has risen significantly and is now above average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or 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: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. As a result of its very caring ethos, pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support it offers are outstanding. The well-being of each individual pupil is at the heart of the school's work. The strong and determined leadership of the headteacher, with the good support of an enthusiastic senior leadership team, is fully focused on raising standards. The detailed analysis of pupils' work and the monitoring of their progress are helping to raising standards. The school is popular and oversubscribed and parents overwhelmingly appreciate the strong impact the school has on their children. A significant number write very positive comments such as, 'The school always makes families as well as children welcome and part of the education.'

Relationships are exceptional and pupils learn in a caring and calm environment. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school because lessons are meaningful and fun. Their behaviour is exemplary. The very strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual development offers them great opportunities for quiet reflection. Consequently they show very high levels of care and respect for everyone. Pupils make a strong contribution to the wider community, willingly supporting local, national and international charities. They are actively involved in raising money by providing spectacular Irish dancing and singing events. They have a very clear understanding of how to stay healthy and safe and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Standards are average and pupils achieve well. Pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 6 pupils reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. There is a three year upward trend in the school's results in tests for 11-year-olds in these subjects. Standards in Year 2 are below average but reflect good progress from the pupils' starting point in Year 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage but children's skills and development are below the expectation for their age when they enter Year 1. Pupils whose first language is not English achieve well. There is no significant difference between standards for girls and boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Teaching and learning are good, because teachers make sure pupils are clear about their learning and what is expected of them. They plan work to match different abilities and learning needs. Lessons are enjoyable so pupils work hard. A particularly good feature of teaching is the way teachers use interactive technology to encourage concentration and make new learning accessible. The good curriculum promotes pupils' personal development and ensures their good academic progress. The school provides outstanding levels of care and pupils work in an environment where they feel safe, valued and supported. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and they show high levels of care for those less fortunate than themselves.

The headteacher, with the support of the enthusiastic management team, makes a major contribution to the work of the school. Good leadership and management ensure that each adult and pupil is valued. Focused monitoring has produced a consistent approach to learning which has resulted in standards rising. The school has identified its strengths accurately and is well focused on what the school needs to do next. There have been good improvements since the last inspection, including the opening of a Children's Centre on the premises. Governors are loyal, well informed and well involved in the life of the school. They are very supportive in

helping the school move forward. With good provision and good outcomes, the school offers good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children's skills and capabilities on entry to the Nursery have declined in recent years and are well below those normally seen of children of this age. Fewer children than is usual have the speaking and personal skills typical for their age. Children make satisfactory progress overall, and in developing early literacy and mathematical skills. They make good progress in their personal development. Children begin school in a safe and secure setting and parents are delighted with the induction procedures and the way the school keeps them well informed about their child's progress. As a result, children become settled and ready to learn. Children behave well and become increasingly sensitive to the needs of others. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Having identified the need to develop children's thinking, talking and independence skills, the school is successfully planning adult-led and appropriate activities within the curriculum. However, planning for learning when children can choose activities lacks detail. Learning in the outdoors is limited mainly to physical activity and opportunities for children to learn in all areas of the curriculum are missed. Teachers have a satisfactory understanding of the progress children are making on a day-to-day basis. However, they are over-generous in assessing what children know, understand and can do at the end of the Foundation Stage. Foundation Stage managers have a secure understanding of children's needs and what needs to be done to improve provision further, for example, in caring well for pupils' emotional needs to prepare them better for learning, and in developing their language skills to improve their grasp of what they are learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve planning in Foundation Stage to ensure learning takes place when children choose activities, and to provide a wider range of learning opportunities in the outdoors.
- Make sure assessment in the Foundation Stage is an accurate reflection of children's development and progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are average by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6. Children's skills and capabilities on entry to school have declined in recent years and are well below those normally seen in children of this age. Standards in Key Stage 1 are below average. Recent reorganisation of teaching staff and the introduction of a range of strategies to improve writing and mathematics have resulted in better progress and it is now good. The good progress continues in Key Stage 2 and there is a three year upward trend in standards, with significant strength shown in writing in the 2007 tests. By the age of 11, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science and the majority of pupils reach challenging targets in their tests. A small minority of those of above average ability do not achieve as well as they could, especially in mathematics. The school has therefore introduced new strategies within lessons to improve standards for all pupils in this subject. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Those who are learning English as a new language make particularly good progress during their time in school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school is very successful in creating a happy, safe and harmonious environment, consequently pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic learners. One pupil commented, 'This is a good place to be. It is safe and happy, just like a big family', reflecting the views of many. Pupils have a very clear understanding about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy their school lunches and daily fruit and vegetables. They enthusiastically participate in physical activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly strong. This is evident in the high levels of self-esteem, in the smiling faces and the friendly and courteous way they approach adults. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about world-wide cultures and different ways of life through schemes such as, 'Sharing Our World'. They know that the school listens to their concerns and respects their views through the school council. Pupils are very successful in raising money for a range of charities. Good links have been established with feeder secondary schools and pupils are well prepared for the next phase in their education. Attendance is satisfactory and the school works well with other agencies to ensure pupils come to school regularly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall. The consistent approach to ensure pupils know what they are learning, and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson, has a positive impact on improving progress. Teachers' planning is thorough and takes careful account of differing abilities and pupils' previous learning, so that work set provides challenge and enjoyment for all groups of pupils. Teachers typically use interactive technology boards effectively to focus pupils' attention and extend their concentration. Pupils' work is rigorously marked, helping them to understand what they need to do next to improve. Pupils know how much their teachers care for them and value their ideas. As a result, they respond very well to the level of praise and stimulation and consequently learning is enjoyable. In the most successful lessons, teachers use their knowledge of pupils' progress to challenge them well. In less effective, but overall satisfactory lessons, long introductions reduce opportunities for pupils to collaborate with others and impede the opportunity for them to practise their skills and apply their knowledge. Teaching assistants work effectively alongside teachers and contribute well to the overall quality of pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. It covers all statutory requirements and is well matched to pupils' needs and interests. There is good emphasis on the acquisition of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and of information and communication technology. Pupils have the opportunity to extend and practise their basic skills through other subjects. Personal, social, health and citizenship education makes a strong contribution towards pupils' personal development, as well as to their understanding of a healthy lifestyle and how to keep safe. Personal development is also enhanced through a residential visit to Holy Island for pupils in Year 6. The school is strongly committed to meeting the needs of all its pupils. It provides well for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as a new

language. Although provision for pupils identified as gifted and talented is generally effective, the school has plans in place to develop it further. The teaching of a modern foreign language in Key Stage 2 further enhances pupils' ideas of the wider world. Educational visits and visitors reinforce planned topics and enrich the curriculum by providing many additional learning experiences that pupils enjoy. A broad range of extra-curricular activities contributes significantly to pupils' learning and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are outstanding. The school is totally committed to providing a safe, happy, friendly place in which to learn. Parents and pupils really value this caring approach. One family commented, 'We are proud to be a family of English Martyrs'. Parents know their children are valued and their concerns listened to. In Key Stages 1 and 2 assessing and analysing pupils' progress is very well established, enabling detailed tracking of their performance. As a result, pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve and what they are aiming for in their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities really value the way they are involved, together with their parents and school staff, in setting their own personal and academic targets for improvement. Child protection arrangements and adult vetting procedures are effective and comply with current legislation. The parental support adviser and the school chaplain both make a significant contribution to this aspect of the schools' provision.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is well supported by the enthusiastic senior leadership team. Together they show high levels of commitment to ensuring pupils' well-being is nurtured and standards improve. Their ambition for pupils is one of the reasons why standards are improving. Priorities for staff development are identified through regular monitoring. The checking of assessments and data analysis, particularly in writing, have resulted in curricular improvements and more challenging targets being set for pupils. The outcome of this effective work is beginning to pay off and is reflected in higher achievement in writing. The school is now clearly focused on raising attainment in mathematics. Senior staff have been fully involved in evaluating the school and all wholeheartedly support the thorough improvement plan which focuses closely on the areas identified. Issues from the last inspection have been successfully tackled and the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Governance is good. Knowledgeable and loyal governors are well informed and completely involved in the life of the school. They support the school well through new initiatives, including the opening of a Children's Centre within the school premises. They know the school well and are well aware of the standards and progress pupils make. They are very clear about what is done well and what needs to be improved.

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Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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.

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

29 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of English Martyrs' RC Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 2SA

It was a real pleasure for the inspection team to visit your school. We have never seen so many smiling faces, nor have we ever met so many polite and helpful pupils. Thank you very much for helping us to find out all about your school, during our two day visit.

We were very impressed with your enthusiasm and the pleasant conversations we had with you. You are so proud of your work and you show great confidence when talking with adults. We were particularly delighted to see how much you care for each other in classes and outside. You are also very generous in the way you give up your free time to sing and dance for charity. I am sure the children in far away countries will be thrilled with the gifts you send to them.

We can see you are all working hard and trying your best. That is why standards are getting better in your school. Your writing is particularly impressive and it is good to see so many of you working very hard to improve your reading and your mathematics. The youngest children in the nursery and reception classes have lots of interesting play activities indoors. I have asked the school to look at the area outside too, and to think of more activities to help them to learn new things out there. I have also asked the school to make sure that assessments for these children show exactly how well they are getting on in the Foundation Stage.

On behalf of the inspectors, I wish you good luck for your future. I hope you continue to enjoy your life at school and that you always keep smiling and do your very best.

Yours sincerely

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector