

English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120228
Local Authority	Rutland
Inspection number	327235
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	82
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Archer
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Hooley
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Willow Crescent Oakham Rutland LE15 6EH
Telephone number	01572 722400
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average. It serves families in Oakham town and its surrounding area who are seeking a Catholic education for their children. The vast majority of pupils are White British, with a very small number from several minority ethnic groups. The background of pupils varies but, overall, is neither strongly advantaged nor disadvantaged. Children's attainment on entry is generally a little below average, but varies from year to year because of the small class sizes. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, though a higher proportion than usual has a statement of special educational needs. A single Reception class offers Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision. The school holds the Active School's Mark and Healthy School accreditation. It has recently formed a 'soft' federation with another primary school, in nearby Stamford.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a school with remarkably strong support from parents. They are right to believe it cares for their children well. Its overall effectiveness is satisfactory because in the crucial area of academic achievement, pupils make gains that are satisfactory rather than good. There are issues to be resolved to ensure better achievement and higher standards and the school has begun to act on these.

Children enter the EYFS with slightly lower than average standards, but leave the school matching national standards in English, mathematics and science. Results at both key stages vary noticeably from year to year, to some extent reflecting the impact individual performance can make when each year group is very small. However, it is also clear that while teaching and learning overall are satisfactory, the quality also varies, with consistently good practice in EYFS and in Years 5 and 6. The intervening years have satisfactory teaching and learning and pupils' progress reflects these differences.

Pupils are offered a good curriculum. While the school rightly wishes to improve it further, it is already successful in promoting enjoyment of learning and a rising trend in most standards. Extra-curricular provision enhances pupils' experience very well. Pupils speak highly of sporting, musical and dance activities. These, and visits to support local events, such as carol singing in the town, in church and at an old people's home, help pupils to gain confidence and build cohesion in the community.

Strong personal development stems from consistently caring attitudes from staff and good underpinning policies and procedures. All statutory requirements for welfare and safety are met and the school provides good moral and spiritual guidance. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for their families is good. The good quality of care results in pupils adopting mature and reflective attitudes. They demonstrate care for others around school and by their charitable giving, for instance, to projects in Malawi. Their enjoyment is reflected in high attendance levels and they are proud of the school and its Christian foundation. Pupils have an adequate awareness of their standards and how to improve, but scope exists to improve this aspect.

The school's leadership and management are currently satisfactory, reflecting their impact on standards and academic progress. There are already good features, including the very clear expectations for behaviour and the Christian ethos the headteacher has succeeded in establishing. She has also been effective in leading the school's self-evaluation and her accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses has enabled action to be taken on areas of underperformance. The school is aware that more needs to be done. Some positive trends include the sharp rise in science standards, the steady improvement over the last two years in mathematics and the arresting of a slow decline in English. Writing, in particular, has been a focus and pupils in all Key Stage 2 years are producing improved work as a result. The governing body has become stronger recently and good leadership of the EYFS has been established. Overall, the school now has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

On arrival, children's skills are generally slightly below those expected for their age. However, good teaching and leadership ensure that they achieve well and enter Key Stage 1 with broadly

average standards. Social and emotional skills improve particularly quickly, because the atmosphere in the EYFS is welcoming to both children and their parents. Children behave well and any anxieties they may have are dealt with quickly, as their welfare and well-being are taken seriously. The partnership with parents and carers is valued: staff take time to share the children's learning with parents as they arrive and also to ensure that any concerns or worries are addressed. Children make good progress in communication and excellent progress in learning their sounds. Progress in mathematics is generally good, though some children find number operations hard to master. They make impressive progress physically, partly because walking to school is systematically promoted and all Reception classes are taken swimming. In addition, many children are members of sports clubs out of school hours. A very stimulating indoor and outdoor environment is provided, with easy flow between the two, which promotes good independent play and learning. Staff demonstrate good practice in listening and respecting each other's views. The children's attitudes towards one another are positive. They look out for each other and encourage their friends to participate and play together. Leadership and management are good, with a clear view of the effectiveness of the provision and a vision for what needs to be done to improve further. Assessment is thorough and put to good use in shaping provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 4 to match the consistently good quality found in other parts of the school, adopting the fast pace, active involvement of pupils and secure independent learning seen in the best lessons.
- Help pupils to gain a greater awareness of their own standards (levels) and how they can improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, attainment broadly matches national levels. Satisfactory overall achievement is composed of consistently rapid progress in Reception and parts of Key Stage 2, with satisfactory gains in Key Stage 1. At each stage, pupils' achievement varies because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. While English, mathematics and science results in Year 6 are broadly average, those in English have declined steadily for a few years but are now recovering as fresh strategies are applied to help promote writing skills, especially amongst boys. At the same time, science provision has recently become far more geared to practical work. The subject is led and taught more effectively, and standards have made marked gains as a result. Standards in some non-core subjects are high, and pupils' work in history and physical education is particularly impressive. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's greatest success is to take pupils with a wide range of behaviour and attitudes and create a strong family atmosphere, built on care and respect. The religious foundation of

the school is evident in pupils' excellent spiritual development. Many talk explicitly about religious faith, while even more demonstrate a very good ability to be reflective about their lives and those of others. Moral and social development are good and are evident in the good behaviour that predominates, as well as in the care for others shown by charitable giving. The school widens pupils' cultural awareness well so that they are well informed about a linked community in Malawi and about ethnic minority communities in Britain. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy and safe lives. Their enjoyment of school is good and leads to above-average attendance levels. Basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology equip them satisfactorily for the next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is evidence of some outstanding practice and much that is good, with a significant proportion that is satisfactory. Very occasionally, it is inadequate. Overall, this allows pupils to make satisfactory progress. In Reception, practice is consistently good, so that pupils quickly gain confidence and learning skills. In Key Stage 1, teaching and learning are satisfactory, while in Key Stage 2, especially Years 5 and 6, they are predominantly good. The crucial features of the good lessons seen are strong pace, high levels of challenge and maximum active involvement of pupils; timings are clear so that staff and pupils know the urgency of the limits of any phase of the lesson. In satisfactory lessons, a minority of pupils can be inattentive at times, staff are dominant for extended sections and pupils have less opportunity to speak and work independently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The formal curriculum promotes enjoyment well. Even though there is more to be done to clarify the focus on skills and concepts, in much of the school the curriculum already helps to ensure good progress. Where progress is satisfactory, this reflects the pace of lessons rather than the opportunities offered by provision. Pupils also benefit from more specialist provision than is common in science, physical education, art, history and music, and they achieve well in these subjects. Off-site education provides another valuable dimension, especially in dance, drama and sport. The extended schools programme enriches pupils' experiences through a range of activities, including a very popular dance club, study support and a film club. Some extra-curricular work helps pupils to gain insights into cultures other than their own, for instance, the Chinese week and ongoing links with a community in Malawi.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect is good and is largely responsible for the pupils' impressive personal development. On entry to the school, some year groups exhibit quite challenging behaviour, as do a few pupils transferring mid-year from other schools. However, staff are persistent in seeking a positive response and apply policies clearly and consistently. They receive strong support from the headteacher and governors in promoting only considerate and mature conduct. The caring attitudes of staff leave pupils in no doubt as to how much they matter. The high level of trust placed in pupils was demonstrated by the major part given to them in an outstanding assembly

seen during the inspection. They know what to do and who to approach if problems arise. All statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection are met. The staff have good tracking systems for promoting academic progress, though pupils themselves are less well aware of what standards they are at and how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

This area is satisfactory because, currently, it leads to satisfactory academic progress by pupils. There are good features, such as the very positive gains pupils make in their personal development. The headteacher sets a good tone, making it clear that expectations for behaviour are high and ensuring a secure and happy learning environment for pupils. With her colleagues, she has made a very accurate self evaluation of the school's strengths and weakness and has taken action to rectify problems. For example, Key Stage 2 English standards have stabilised and started to rise, following her decision to direct more attention to aspects of writing; and the teaching and learning are monitored well, with new strategies that are beginning to change aspects of practice. Subject leaders have a clear grasp of their role. Governors, many of them quite new in post, already have a good awareness of their role and a satisfactory and improving impact on school life. Leadership and management of the EYFS are good. The school plays a central role in the life of the local area and wider Catholic community. It succeeds in broadening pupils' and adults' understanding of different cultures and the wider world.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

23 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School, Oakham, LE15 6EH

I enjoyed my recent visit to your school. Thank you for your welcome and special thanks to those who gave up part of Wednesday lunchtime to come and talk to me. Your school gives you a sound education with many things that are good. I was most impressed with:

- the extremely strong support for the school from parents and carers
- your good behaviour and the way school helps you mature
- the good progress you make in several areas of your work
- the high quality of teaching in many lessons
- the way the headteacher encourages you, your teachers and their assistants: she has made the school a very happy place
- the good start you get in Reception and the particularly strong finish in Years 5 and 6
- your willingness to care for others in school, in Oakham or abroad, for instance in Malawi
- the many activities that happen outside lessons, such as school history trips, the dance club, film club and sports programme
- the good support and care staff give you, especially if you find school and learning difficult.

If the school is to become even better, it should:

- help you make good progress right across the school by making sure that the quality of teaching in all year groups is equally good
- help the older pupils among you become more aware of the levels you are working at and how you can improve.

Best wishes for the rest of your time at English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Bob Drew

Lead inspector