



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 118764

English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

Frindsbury Road

Strood Rochester

Kent

ME2 4JA

Inspection date: 8th October 2021

Chair of Governors: Mr Akinola Edun

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Clare Redmond

Head of School: Ms Catherine Thacker

Inspectors: Mr Stephen Beck

Mrs Lisa D'Agostini

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes



Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

English Martyrs' School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Chatham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Medway Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is English Martyrs, a large parish in Strood. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 51%. This percentage has declined since the last inspection as a result of changes in the area's demographics. This has seen a significant increase in the proportion of Black African and eastern European families, which the school has managed well.

The school is located in one of the most deprived localities of the South-East, with pupils drawn from a wide catchment area and range of socio-economic backgrounds. Attendance rates are commendably high. Published information shows that many pupils enter the school at levels below those expected. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in all Key Stages. The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 198. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly below average. Around 10% of pupils receive extra support in class. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is average.

Parents commented that during the recent pandemic and periods of shutdown, the school's leadership was proactive in making educational provisions for the pupils. They also kept in touch with families to ensure they had the necessary resources for home learning and day to day living.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

English Martyrs is a Good Catholic school because:

- The school is well led and managed. The Executive Headteacher, Head of School and Religious Education Leader are passionate about the school's Catholic Ethos placing a high value on developing pupils' spiritual well-being within a caring and nurturing environment that focuses on developing the whole child. They have developed a very collegiate work ethic among all staff that is a strength of the school and supports ongoing improvement and staff professional development.
- It is a fully inclusive school where pupils from all faiths and none are made welcome, and all show respect and genuine interest and care towards each other. In essence, the school acts like a global village welcoming all.
- It is a school that knows itself well because it has put in place reliable procedures for self-evaluation, which enable strengths and weaknesses to be highlighted. Action is taken to improve practice and outcomes.
- Pupils make good, steady progress from the early years foundation stage (EYFS) so that by the end of Key Stage 1, they are meeting expectations. At the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils are meeting their targets with some exceeding expectations.
- Pupils have a growing understanding of what it means to be in a Catholic school and how it differs from other schools, particularly the prayerful atmosphere and uplifting visual surroundings. They talk clearly about the impact this has on their view of life and their relationships with others.
- The behaviour of pupils and their care for others is good and contributes much to the spirituality and ethos of the school. Their behaviour for learning is very positive. They enjoy their Religious Education studies, and they make good progress over time.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to undertake independent tasks and lines of enquiry.
- Further, develop the classroom focal points to allow for pupil input.
- Review the school's Mission Statement to confirm its relevance today is more high profile in promoting the values the school espouses. This should include the school's website and policy documentation.



Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	2
Catholic Life	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	2
Religious Education	2
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	2
Collective Worship	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.	1
The quality of provision for Collective Worship.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	1



CATHOLIC LIFE

2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is good

- The pupils of English Martyrs school live out the mission statement and truly strive to create a community with Christ as their model for life. They display great enthusiasm for the school as a 'family' where support is readily available in any situation. They speak warmly of the school as a community where everyone is included and has a role to play. Pupils are respectful of each individual, demonstrating their living faith.
- The quality of relationships is a significant strength of English Martyrs. The community is permeated by an atmosphere of care and concern for each of its members. There is a sense of order and respect for all. All pupils, regardless of their faith background, have a deep experience of belonging and, as a result, demonstrate their total commitment to the school.
- The behaviour of students is exemplary at all times. They listen readily to the views of others and recognise that forgiveness is a value that is implicit throughout the community.
- Giving a fresh start to individuals is acknowledged as a key Gospel value.
- There is confidence among all pupils, which allows them to be actively involved in all aspects of the Catholic Life of the school regardless of their own faith. There is no reservation in participating in any aspect of Catholic Life. They are keen to offer their gifts in the service of others.
- Pupils are proud of their Catholic community and the links to the parishes and the diocese. Present and past students embrace participation in parish and school liturgical celebrations. A high value is placed by pupils on the centrality of the Catholic Life and the school's faith.
- There are real opportunities given to pupils to assist those in need through charitable events. This is evident in their work with CAFOD, the use of their resources and a broad range of charities that pupils are involved in selecting. Opportunities to engage with the broader faith community are well developed, with visits organised to other places of worship such as the local synagogue.
- A solid Catholic ethos runs throughout everything in the school, with relationships based on Gospel values. There is a positive atmosphere with pupils who are sensitive and responsive to others. Pupils' attitudes and behaviours are good. From an early age, pupils are expected to show respect and take responsibility for their actions.
- The Mission Statement states, '*As a Roman Catholic school, we create an atmosphere in which children can grow into the fullness of their faith. We develop their understanding of and respect for people of all religions and cultures.*' It is brief and clear and seeks to underpin the life and achievements of the school being lived out daily. This could now be given greater prominence to ensure it is disseminated as widely as possible.



The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is good

- The Executive Headteacher, Head of School and Religious Education Leader have successfully sustained and built on the Catholic Life of the school since the last inspection securing English Martyrs as a good school.
- Inspection finds that the leadership and management of the Catholic Life of the school are good. Staff are good role models for pupils, with the support of the Religious Education subject leader, who encourages pupils and staff in prayer and supports them where appropriate.
- Governors and school leaders are fully involved in the day-to-day life of the school, regularly joining staff and pupils for worship, the celebration of Mass and other liturgies. They ensure that prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and are a vital part of every school celebration.
- Leaders ensure there are very strong links with the parish community.
- Pupils are given a range of opportunities to take on roles of responsibility. They have a sense of identity and take pride in developing the Catholic Life of the school. They lead with confidence, passion and commitment.
- The J@EM group (Jesus at English Martyrs) comprises high attainers from Yr2 to Yr6, who meet weekly to study Scripture and plan Collective Worship (on a termly rota). The Year 6 'Children of Faith' prayer group meet once a week to pray. Pupils from this group occasionally plan and deliver assemblies for the rest of the school, as do the J@EMs every week. Each class also has two representatives who are 'Anti-Bullying Mentors' This reflects a broad range of opportunities to take on leadership roles.
- The importance given to the Catholic Life of the school is evidenced in the policy, planning and review documents and the variety of activities available to the pupils.
- Current structures and systems are in place in the school, along with the commitment of the Executive Headteacher, Head of school, Religious Education Leader and staff to ensure continued and uninterrupted provision for pupils. Throughout the recent pandemic, this has been a strength and has commendably supported the pupils' ongoing welfare and progress.
- School Development and self-evaluation documentation indicate the aspiration to integrate the school's mission and values into all aspects of the life of the school. Pupils respond positively and are often keen to participate in or lead those activities that promote the Catholic Life of the school, both within the school and in the wider community. This is evident in pupils' attitudes, 'student voice' responses, community and charitable activities, prayer and worship, relationships and their approach to learning and achievement.
- The aspiration to be outstanding is clear and provides a solid drive to improve provision further, and the capacity to do so has been established.



How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good

- Leaders and governors are good at promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. The leadership team is fully committed to and prioritise the Church's mission in education.
- The development of the Catholic Life of the school is viewed as a core leadership responsibility. Moving forward, the school's targets are realistic and there is the capacity for these to be actioned successfully.
- Relationships at every level are very good across the school and all are working together as a cohesive team. Leaders and governors have shown a commitment to training and further development of staff. Continuous Professional Development focusing on the Catholic Life of the school takes place regularly.
- The school had an exceptional link governor with responsibility for Catholic Life and Religious Education who actively supported English Martyrs in lots of ways. She was keen to ensure that she effectively helped the subject leader, that there were regular school visitors and she ran a weekly prayer group. She accompanied pupils to special religious events, including the Good Shepherd Mass at Aylesbury Priory. Sadly, she passed away a while ago. This role has now been taken on by the parish priest, who is a governor. He is supportive of the school and the community greatly values his input.
- The school has developed successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers to the benefit of pupils. The school offers an open-door policy, sends out regular newsletters and has an informative website. As a result, parents and carers understand the school's mission and are very supportive of it. The school website would benefit from more regular updating and greater use to celebrate more widely aspects of the school's Catholic Life.
- The school responds well to Archdiocesan policies and initiatives and promotes the Archdiocesan vision throughout the school.
- The school has introduced Ten-Ten as its new scheme of work for Relationships and Sex Education alongside Personal, Social and Health Education and Religious Education. This has been very successful and staff, pupils and parents all rated this development very highly.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good

- Most pupils, from their varied starting points, make good progress in each key stage. The majority attain at least age-related expectations by the end of Key Stage 2, with some pupils working at greater depth. All groups of pupils are supported and challenged to enable them to progress well.
- A parent wrote, *'I believe that my son is really happy and supported at English Martyrs'*. Pupils said they enjoyed thinking about challenging questions and that teachers would always help them if they had any problems.
- School monitoring includes learning walks, discussion with pupils and pupil surveys. Results indicate that pupils enjoy Religious Education lessons, have a good knowledge and understanding of Religious Education and are articulate at an age-appropriate level in describing their faith and learning. The findings of this inspection support this.
- Pupils interviewed as part of this inspection were enthusiastic regarding their Religious Education lessons and recognised their relevance to their own lives. Pupils actively participate in lessons. They are thoughtful and responsive and keen to do their best.
- Behaviour for learning was excellent in all the lessons observed. In consequence, pupils enjoy their learning and make progress. Pupils use a good range of religious vocabulary appropriately. This was evident in pupils' written work, responses to teachers' questioning, and pupil interviews. There is now an opportunity to provide more opportunities for pupils to undertake independent tasks and lines of enquiry within Religious Education to provide further challenge.
- Pupils are attentive and engaged in lessons. They are committed to maximising their learning in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills. They can reflect spiritually and make connections between their lessons, other curriculum areas, and events in the wider world.
- A pupil said, *'The learning in Religious Education has helped me to change what I do. Now I try to help people around me and help charities'*.
- Work in pupils' books is of a good standard in both presentation and content. Pupils are proud of their work and confident in describing their learning. Pupils use Bibles with confidence and enjoyment, both to look up Bible references and find examples to support their answers to teachers' questions.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good

- Since the school's last inspection, it has introduced the scheme 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' for which staff have received training. Teachers are competent and confident using up-to-date technology to enhance learning.



- Since the summer of 2021, they have used 'Life to the Full', a programme by Ten Ten, which has drawn on guidance from CES and Diocese to teach RSE (Relationships and Sex Education). There is a shared vision that RSE is about developing the whole person – the spiritual, social, moral and cultural education of pupils and this permeates the approach all staff take.
- The majority of pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and can relate previous learning to new learning. They can work collaboratively in groups or independently and many demonstrate good behaviours for learning. However, some pupils, especially the more able, need to be further challenged. Some of the pupils, who spoke to the inspectors, felt that their Religious Education work could be more challenging.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment in Religious Education is in line with expectations. However, increasing pupils' extended writing in Religious Education would provide greater evidence for these teacher judgements. Evidence of this was identified in other curriculum areas when talking to pupils. They gave an example of writing to a scientist to argue that the 'Big Bang Theory' was not incompatible with their faith. This was a challenging science task that they took up really well. This approach could usefully be extended to Religious Education tasks.
- The amount and quality of work in pupils' books is consistent and shows a variety of activities and recording styles. Expectations could now be raised further to maximise opportunities for pupils to be challenged and challenge themselves.
- Pupils have a good understanding of key stories and events in the Bible. They are able to talk about the Old and New Testaments, such as the Creation Story and Noah's Ark.
- When teaching was at its most effective during the inspection, teachers used assessment for learning opportunities and feedback mechanisms to structure questioning so that progress within the lesson for all groups of learners was swift. Teaching assistants are generally used well to ensure impact for key individuals or groups across the whole of the lesson.
- The Religious Education subject leader should ensure that the school's best practice in assessment for learning and feedback is consistent across all classes.
- Teachers new to the school say that they have received formal and informal support from the Religious Education subject leader and can ask questions to improve their knowledge. The parish priest also provides regular support in this regard.
- Good teaching and planning ensure pupils make good progress and attain very well. Teachers maximise opportunities for creativity and include cross-curricular links in the teaching of Religious Education.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good

- Leaders and governors are good at monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education. They are enthusiastic and successful in promoting the high profile of Religious Education in the school.



- The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference, with at least 10% of curriculum time being given to Religious Education in all key stages.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and are committed to improving it., They provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders.
- Leaders, including governors, conduct a range of monitoring activities that secures a good understanding of the Religious Education curriculum.
- The school's self-evaluation document provided for this inspection indicates that leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths. It would be beneficial to develop this document further to include identified areas for development that can be articulated with timescales to make this more of a working document linked to the school's development plan. The curriculum leader for Religious Education has worked hard to ensure any new initiatives are in place and staff are supported regarding those changes.
- The school benefits from a dedicated Religious Education Subject Leader who is knowledgeable and forward-thinking about the development of her subject. She supports staff exceptionally well, inspiring them to have confidence in their teaching of Religious Education.
- A number of parental questionnaire returns were received, expressing strong satisfaction with the school's religious provision. As one parent wrote, *'We are very happy with the spiritual guidance the school gives to my child. My daughter comes home and reads the Bible stories she has heard in school and shares them with the family'*.

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

- Pupils' involvement in Collective Worship is an integral part of the school's prayer life and begins in Reception class when they learn to come together.
- Pupils are reverent, respectful and joyful as they increasingly take responsibility in various acts of Collective Worship.
- Dependent upon their age, pupils take on more responsibility in planning, preparing and leading Collective Worship for key stage pupils every week. The Key Stage 2 pupils participating in the worship respond with reverence throughout this prayerful experience.
- Interest in and respect for other faiths was clearly articulated by pupils and parents who were very supportive of children learning about and celebrating the festivals of other religions.
- Pupils' response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding. Pupils value and regularly participate voluntarily in liturgy and prayer. They display confidence using a variety of traditional and contemporary approaches to prayer, scripture, religious artefacts and liturgical music.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. Appropriate to their age and ability, they can prepare acts of Collective Worship, which fully reflects this understanding.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about preparing and leading worship. They are creative and resourceful in their liturgy planning and want it to be the best it can be. Other pupils are engaged by the worship opportunities planned by their peers. On the inspection day, pupils explained, *'We choose our readings. We think about the questions to ask. It's nice to see other people's ideas'*.
- There is a genuine enthusiasm for Collective Worship, reflected in the quality of resources and planning, in the quality of prayerful silence and the depth of reverent participation in communal prayer.
- Acts of Collective Worship engage all pupils' interest and inspire in them deep thought and heartfelt response. On the inspection day, Year 5 led an assembly with confidence that saw all pupils impressively engaged. Pupils were given time with God, prayed together, shared their thoughts and listened to music. An opportunity for reflection was provided along with purposeful tasks to undertake post assembly.
- Pupils are invited to prayer, which is inclusive to all. The quality of kindness, caring relationships and prayerful partnerships between the children and staff are palpable. This is a real strength of the school, enabling daily prayer in a safe and loving environment.
- The experience of living and working in an inclusive, faithful, praying community has a profound and visible effect on the spiritual and moral development of all pupils, irrespective of ability.



The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

- Prayer and acts of Collective Worship are given high priority and are a key feature of every day, and every school celebration, inspiring staff and pupils.
- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship and a good range of structures to ensure that it is frequent, regular and inclusive.
- Collective Worship is carefully planned and resourced to enhance the worship experiences throughout the liturgical year. Pupils and adults praying together is a daily experience and, on occasions, other adults are welcomed into this prayerful community. Leaders are passionate about ensuring that Collective Worship is of the highest quality and take every opportunity to model high-quality liturgies. A planned programme of Collective Worship provides themes chosen to reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical year.
- Parents, parishioners and governors are given further opportunities to share in the spiritual life of the school through various acts of Collective Worship, celebrations and Mass.
- Pupils attend 'The Good Shepherd Liturgy' in Aylesford Priory, where they share their prayers with other schools in the Southwark Diocese. Pupils have opportunities to participate in many different events with other Catholic schools in the Deanery.
- The school website has an online prayer area/page where pupils/parents/staff can share prayers and access religious resources. The school plans to extend this to a prayer book that goes home for families to add their contributions.
- The school has developed a beautiful prayer garden in memory of a past governor. Pupils talked fondly of its meaning and the way they want to use it.
- The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and is well known to staff, pupils and parents. He reassuringly offers valuable guidance and support to staff in terms of their formation and development and his contributions are very highly welcomed and appreciated by all.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

- Leaders have a clear vision for the development of Collective Worship, which is understood and supported by the entire school community. They have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons, rites, and symbols and effectively use a range of artefacts, symbols, and ICT to deepen the pupils' appreciation, knowledge, and understanding.
- Leaders use a range of prayer styles to promote inclusion; both contemporary and traditional prayers are valued.



- The school community engages exceptionally well in the prayer life of the school. Pupils are familiar with traditional rites and symbols and opportunities for reflection positively impact the spiritual formation of all.
- Leaders give priority to the professional development of staff so that they are well positioned to prepare pupils to plan and lead Collective Worship.
- Through self-evaluation, school leaders revised the school Collective Worship policy and now pupils are consistently equipped with the knowledge and skills to develop their own acts of worship with confidence, competency and independence.
- Governors are rightly very proud of the development of Collective Worship that has seen the school's leadership invest time and resources to develop this area of school life.
- The Governing Board discharges its statutory and canonical duties well. The Chair of Governors, together with the whole governing body, is well informed and knowledgeable about the school.

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