



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

## ENGLISH MARTYRS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BIRMINGHAM

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Inspection dates 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014  
Reporting Inspector Teresa Quick

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 -11 years
Number on roll	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Fr P Gilsenan
School address	Evelyn Road Sparkhill Birmingham B11 3JW
Telephone number	0121 4643150
E-mail address	enquiry@englishmartyrs.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2009
DFE School number	330/3321
Unique Reference Number	103425

**Headteacher** Evelyn Harper

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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



## **Evidence**

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed in 8 RE lessons with the headteacher. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. She held meetings with the chair and vice chair of governors, staff and a member of the parish Communitas group with which the school has strong links. She observed an assembly, attended Mass and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, and pupils' behaviour. She looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about the organisation of a Catholic school where there are pupils of many differing faiths. This evidence will be shared with other diocesan schools.

## **Information about the school**

English Martyrs is a large Catholic primary school serving the parish of English Martyrs in Sparkhill in Birmingham. Sparkhill is a multi-cultural area of Central/East Birmingham. The pupils come from an area of deprived socio- economic backgrounds. This is an almost 100% faith school made up of most all the main world faiths. The number of Catholic pupils is currently 9% as at the time of the last inspection. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils supported through the pupil premium is much higher than the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who need extra support for their learning is above average. Attainment on entry is well below the national average overall.

## **Main Finding**

In its self evaluation the school rightly judges that the RE and the Catholicity of the school are good. It gives a clear picture of the school and what it needs to do to improve. It provides pupils with a harmonious inclusive faith community in which to develop. Teaching is good with pupils learning in a loving, caring environment where inclusion, respect and faith are developed and raising standards are at the heart of all they do. Both the Catholic life and curriculum for religious education are good with elements of Catholic life outstanding. On entry pupils' knowledge and understanding of the faith is very low but there is outstanding progress as they journey through the school. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place for religious education and being improved. There is a detailed action plan for the development of Catholic life. Informal evaluation of Catholic life between the school and the priest is on going with formal evaluation developing. The leadership of the subject in particular by the headteacher and her deputy is good. RE is clearly a priority subject in the school. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and are very positive about religious education. The school works in harmony as part of the parish and local community. The school encourages outstanding spiritual and moral development of its pupils as a priority. There is a palpable Catholic ethos.

## **School self evaluation**

Self evaluation at English Martyrs provides a realistic picture of where the school is in its Catholic life and religious education. There are clear steps to make further improvement. The school has a thorough understanding of the mission of the school in the worldwide

church and the local community. There is a strong commitment to raise within the pupils positive attitudes towards themselves and others through a strong ethos of loving care and respect for all. They do this by ensuring this is an inclusive community by providing good religious life experiences and education for the pupils.

The self-evaluation document is written by the senior leadership team which includes the subject leader with contributions from staff and governors. Evidence from the self-evaluation leads to well directed in-service provision for staff provided within school and with external training often linked to the Birmingham Catholic Partnership, the Diocesan Education Service, and links with other Catholic schools. The impact of this training and support is a confident knowledgeable staff capable of imparting and inspiring the curriculum for RE. The pupils are encouraged to consider the vocation of "What has God asked me to be?" There are many opportunities given but the school lacks a cohesive vocations curriculum. Observation of pupil responses during collective worship and RE lessons and feedback through pupil voice show children enjoy these opportunities. The monitoring of the Catholic life is on going with regular contact between the school and the chair of governors. He and the vice chair have been involved in lesson observations, book trawls and learning walks which ensure they have a clear picture of RE and the Catholic Life of the school. The priest is impressed with the knowledge of the pupils prior to the reception of the sacraments. There is informal monitoring and detailed regular formal monitoring of the teaching and learning in RE which gives a clear picture to staff and governors of children's needs.

There is appropriate challenge to the school from the link governor for RE, who is also the chair of governors together with the vice chair of governors. They are very knowledgeable. There is regular contact with the link governor for RE and the school and much informal monitoring. Formal reporting to the governing body is made by the headteacher. Governors' knowledge and challenge supports an overall judgement for leadership and management of the Catholic life as good.

The school judges the provision for RE to be good. The subject leader is knowledgeable about the faith. Planning is in place. Assessment is graded as good. It is developing with a new assessment procedure in place. The judgement that teaching and learning is good is realistic. Pupils make outstanding progress but attainment is good overall. There is good teaching assistant support for learning. Pupils work well individually and in collaboration. All pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning. Tasks in lessons are varied to meet individual needs. This is less obvious in the children's books. Books are regularly monitored. Marking an action point at the time of the last inspection now regularly enhances pupils' learning. The religious curriculum is judged as good. It does not stand alone. It is the centre of the entire curriculum. Time allocation each week meets that required of the Bishops' Conference.

### **Overall effectiveness of the school<sup>1</sup>**

This is a good Catholic school with outstanding elements in its Catholic life. The strong Catholic ethos permeates the whole school. Pupils learn in a loving, caring environment. This ensures that outcomes for pupils in this mixed faith setting are above what could be expected. There are a high proportion of Catholic teachers and others knowledgeable about the faith. All pupils are enabled to find their own path to God. The governors regularly visit the school. Each week the chair and vice-chair of governors meet the headteacher to up date the governors on the work of the school and discuss ways in which they can support the school. Governors know the school well and have taken part in

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<sup>1</sup> As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

learning and environment walks. This very good work of the link governor is not formally reported to governors.

Pupils enter school with low knowledge of the prayer and the life of Jesus. Orally the pupils can show their knowledge and understanding but this same standard is not yet evidenced in their books. Books do not show the same quality of differentiation in learning as that is seen in lessons. All pupils have a faith and speak as interested parties. In Year 2 pupils articulate a good knowledge for their age. They can talk about the parables and miracles of Jesus and have learned a variety of prayers. Pupils show a respect for each other's faiths and are keen to learn about the different faiths. Year 6 standards are generally at diocesan expectations or above. The pupils have a very good understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Religious belief is important to pupils who respect the beliefs of the other pupils. Teaching provides a range of different activities that encourage enthusiasm in pupils to help their learning so all pupils achieve well. The pupils respond well to learning about religion and from religion. The personalised learning in RE shows different strategies to support learners with additional needs including pupils with SEND and EAL needs and those newly arrived with little English who then all achieve well. These pupils are well supported by teaching assistants and the very good pastoral systems. There is good use made of teachers and teaching assistants of differing faiths. The response of pupils in lessons is excellent and they enjoy what they do. The ethos of the school, the Catholic life and the teaching in RE supports the outstanding spiritual and moral development.

Collective worship is good. Children engage wholeheartedly in a range of opportunities for collective worship and prayer. Pupils have limited opportunities to plan and prepare prayer services. This is an area the school plans to develop. Pupils are generous in their support for both local and the worldwide charities of the Church. In assemblies, Mass, and prayer services behaviour is outstanding. The subject leader ensures there is a choir to support the liturgy. Differing traditional prayers of the Church are taught as the pupils move through the school. At the time of sacramental preparation the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the faith is good and they are very well prepared. The approaches to prayer life are developing with some delightful classroom prayer circles organised by staff. A variety of liturgies take place at different times of year. Teachers have their own prayer service each week and training days start with Mass.

There are very good relationships between the teachers and the pupils. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils show respect for other pupils, and the adults with whom they come into contact. Behaviour is of a very high standard. Pupils are welcoming and proud of their school. They work, pray and play happily together forming a harmonious community.

Provision is good overall. Teaching is good with some outstanding classroom practice. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the RE curriculum. The teaching ensures that pupils make outstanding progress in their learning. The senior leaders have high expectations and provide excellent support. There is very good peer support. Planning meets the needs of individual pupils. Very good support is provided by the teaching assistants to support the learning of all pupils. There are opportunities for differing types of written work. Pupils' books are regularly monitored by the senior leadership. Consistency of quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work are active issues for the leadership. Marking is positive and now supports individual pupils' learning. Systems of assessment and monitoring are good and are being developed to enhance knowledge to support pupils' learning further. Pupil self assessment is being developed. The school uses the Diocesan Strategy for religious education as the basis for learning. They enhance the curriculum well with clear links to other subjects. Drama, art, music and ICT are used well to support learning in RE.

The school is culturally diverse. Pupils respect one another. There is an air of calm with pupils developing their understanding of peace, tolerance and understanding. The school engages very well with parents, carers, local parishes and other faith communities in its provision. RE has been a high priority subject for expenditure over the last two years. A major project has been the wonderful production of the Year of Faith stained glass window. Excellent banners have been produced giving pictorial and written evidence of the lives of the house saints. The welcoming entrance very artistically proclaims this to be a Catholic school.

### **Recommendations**

In order to improve still further the school should:-

- Involve children more in the planning and organisation of the liturgy.
- Ensure that all pupils' books evidence the range of differentiated activities.
- Further develop the role of the link governor for RE and provide formal reports to the governing body on the Catholic life and religious education in the school.