

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for English Martyrs Catholic Primary School

URN: 110004

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Philip Egan, Bishop of Portsmouth on:

Date: 22 - 23 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

2

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

2

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference



The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop



The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Guided by the mission statement 'Building a learning community of faith, hope and love', there is a strong sense of community. This is particularly evident in the quality of relationships and the culture of welcome.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to live out their faith, and have warmly embraced the school's focus on Catholic social teaching.
- Leaders are strongly committed to the induction of new staff and the ongoing professional development of all who work in the school.
- Pupils speak with confidence about what they've learned in religious education and are able to explain the key religious concepts.

- The seasons and feasts of the liturgical calendar are used to provide a wide range of prayer and liturgical opportunities for pupils and staff. Where possible, these are widened to welcome and include parents and parishioners.

What the school needs to improve:

- Ensure that teaching of religious education is consistent across the school, particularly in relation to planning to meet the needs of all pupils, use of questioning during lessons, and how best to capture the pupils' learning.
- Improve strategic planning across all aspects of the Catholic life of the school, so there is a clear system for measuring the impact of the agreed developmental actions.
- Develop staff skills in leading worship so that everyone is confident in meeting the school's expectations about prayer and liturgy

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

English Martyrs school is a joyful community where pupils feel cared for and are happy and respectful. They understand the school's mission statement 'Building a learning community of faith, hope and love', and know how they can live this out in their daily lives, explaining that they can 'show how we love each other by helping lots of people'. Pupils all know the school's Diamond Rules and use them to support the moral decisions that they make around the school. Pupils are given opportunities to respond to their learning on Catholic social teaching by deciding on a different activity and theme for each year group, for example visiting a care home in Year 3 and raising money for charities such as Launchpad for the homeless. The next step for the school is to embed the principles of Catholic social teaching through other areas of the curriculum. Pupils respect staff and each other, benefitting greatly from the care and support they receive from dedicated staff. They say that all adults are good role models of how to bear witness to the school's Catholic life and mission.

Staff are highly committed to the school's mission statement and charism. They talk enthusiastically about the school as a community rooted in Christ where 'the Christian faith permeates everything'. There is strong pastoral support for all pupils who recognise that they are 'really cared for' and this view is supported by parents. Pupils are given many opportunities to live out their faith, for example as part of the mini-vinnies group, who recently held a Love in Action Day to look at how they could support the rest of the school in putting love into action. The school's physical environment attractively witnesses its mission; the mission statement is prominent and there are well thought-out prayer areas throughout the school and grounds including the rosary garden which pupils talk about as a quiet space to reflect and pray.

Chaplaincy provision is strong, led by the school's liturgy team and gives pupils opportunities to participate in a variety of ministries. The school should now develop more extensive and creative opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff.

Leaders and governors have a firm understanding of and commitment to the Church's mission in education and keep this at the heart of all their work. They have developed a very positive relationship with the local parish to provide frequent opportunities for the pupils to participate in Mass and its related ministries and for the priests to visit the school regularly to support pupils and staff: these visits are particularly valued by pupils. Leaders have ensured that the most vulnerable are prioritised, for example, by employing a family support worker who works alongside the parish St Vincent de Paul group to provide a range of support for those in need. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and value the happy and safe environment that it provides, one parent describing how it has given their child 'a good foundation in Catholic life and values'. New staff feel very welcomed and supported and quickly grow to appreciate what it means to work in a Catholic primary school. Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school, however, monitoring and challenge is not consistent and they need to embed a rigorous self-evaluation process which will ensure measurable impact.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

Pupils speak with confidence about what they have learned and are religiously literate. They speak with enthusiasm about Catholic social teaching and their work on the importance of human dignity, giving real life examples. Year 4 pupils are able to explain the meaning of words such as compassion and humility and how this relates to their own lives using the example of Mother Teresa. Pupils generally engage well in lessons and are keen to do well and improve their knowledge. In a small proportion of lessons, a number of pupils were not sufficiently focused on their learning, as a result the work in the pupils' books is variable; most show evidence of good progress but in others there is some inconsistency in outcomes and a lack of pride in the quality of presentation. Verbally, pupils demonstrate a greater understanding of their learning than is shown in their books. Going forward, the school needs to reflect on how they can best capture and evidence pupils' learning. The school's assessment procedures, particularly the use of cold and hot tasks, help pupils understand how well they are doing in religious education.

All teachers are committed to the value of religious education and want to teach it well. Some are confident in their subject knowledge and how to engage pupils in exploring their faith. Newer staff are developing their knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn best in religious education and are enthusiastic in seeking support and guidance where points have been identified. Planning is not always sufficiently linked to pupils' current assessment and needs. Most teachers use questioning effectively to enable pupils to demonstrate a good level of understanding; they target questions to the specific needs of pupils, thus enabling them to think more deeply and respond more fully both verbally and in written work. The school encourages discussion to aid learning and in some lessons, such as a very engaging early years

lesson on Pentecost, this motivated and inspired the children to discuss and explore ideas on how they could spread the good news today. In less successful lessons, teachers are over-reliant on hands-up questioning, enabling children to potentially opt out of learning. Staff celebrate pupils' work in a variety of ways, for example sending children to the religious education leader to showcase their work. The quality of feedback to pupils on their learning is variable: where it is strongest and most effective, it takes place alongside the pupil, initiating a dialogue to explore their responses and how these may be improved.

The school follows the diocesan scheme of work, ensuring that pupils develop knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Leaders ensure that pupils are provided with a range of engaging enrichment activities in religious education that enhance pupils' leaning and enjoyment of this core subject. There are regular development opportunities for staff such as 'Before You Begin' professional development sessions at the start of each religious education unit and regular staff meeting sessions where staff bring pupils' work which they discuss and moderate together. The subject leader is very enthusiastic and provides good support for staff who speak very highly of the guidance she gives. This also includes providing opportunities for newer staff to observe more experienced staff teaching religious education. Religious education is not given parity to other core subjects in terms of presentation, quality of feedback and ensuring that all work is completed and this needs to be addressed by leaders. Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate teaching and learning on a termly basis but this is not yet systematic or incisive enough to bring about consistent and sustained improvement in religious education. Leaders and governors need to formulate a shared vision for teaching and learning and a clear strategy for achieving it with measurable milestones.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

Pupils respond well to prayer and liturgy. They are reverent and respectful and understand that prayer and liturgy times are for the school community to come together to praise God. Prayer is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff. Pupils are involved in planning and leading prayer and liturgy in age-appropriate ways. In a Year 5 liturgy about forgiveness, for example, pupils confidently led the whole liturgy following a plan provided by the teacher; in a whole-school liturgy, Early years pupils read prayers and scripture, supported by pupils from Year 6. There are opportunities for pupils to learn about and undertake ministries such as serving and reading at Mass, which they embrace willingly. Pupils are familiar with various ways of praying, such as spontaneous and traditional and are able to talk confidently about the different seasons of the Church's year. They should now be given more opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their experience of prayer and liturgy.

A pattern of daily prayer is embedded throughout the school, meaning pupils recognise and value the importance of prayer as the opportunity to talk to God. Some staff are highly skilled at leading worship and this good practice needs to be rolled out to all staff so that everyone is confident in meeting the school's expectations about prayer and can help pupils plan and lead well-constructed liturgy and prayer. Good use is made of physical space to facilitate prayer; each classroom has a dedicated prayer area and parts of the school grounds are used as sacred spaces, such as the Rosary garden. A Stations of the Cross journey has been created around the school and pupils spoke about how they have used this as part of their Lenten preparations. There are frequent opportunities to celebrate the sacraments, including Mass celebrated at school every 2 weeks, the Sacrament of Reconciliation twice a year and a special prayer week during Advent, when each year group takes part in Adoration. The school works

extremely well with parents, inviting them in for class worships and whole school liturgies. Care needs to be taken that due prominence is given to the act of worship within a whole-school gathering, so that it is truly an act of collective worship, rather than an assembly or performance.

Leaders have planned the school's calendar to reflect the Church's year, with appropriate opportunities to celebrate key events such as Mass for Ash Wednesday, the rosary during October and May and a Mass with the parish on the feast of the English Martyrs. Training for staff around prayer and liturgy has been provided both by the subject leader and by making use of external support such as the Dominican Sisters and the local Catholic schools network. It is important that leaders develop a clear understanding of high quality collective worship so that they can then model best practice. Leaders have made strong links with the local parish and this has resulted in the priests coming into school at least once a week to lead services, train pupils in their ministries and spend time in classes answering questions and supporting staff and pupil understanding of prayer and liturgy. In order to ensure that the provision and quality of worship improves, leaders and governors need to accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in this area and implement a clear step-by-step strategy for improvement, which is rigorously monitored and evaluated.

Information about the school

Full name of school	English Martyrs Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	110004
Full postal address of the school	Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4BE
School phone number	01189 375466
Name of head teacher or principal	Cathy Doberska
Chair of governing board	Rosalind Doctor
School Website	https://www.englishmartyrs.reading.sch.uk/home
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	n/a
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Trustees	Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	30 th March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Michael Lobo	Lead inspector
Daniel Gibbons	Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement