

English Martyrs Catholic Primary School

St. Mark Street, Aldgate, London E1 8DJ

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 13 May 2022



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- Leaders have recently redesigned the RE curriculum based on the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* to actively engage pupils in their learning.
- Most pupils make good progress however pupils need more varied tasks to ensure all needs are met.
- Pupils' attitude to learning, including individual work, group work and whole class work are consistently positive.
- Overall, the typicality of teaching is never less than consistently good.
- Teaching is effective in ensuring pupils are consistently engaged in lessons. Questioning is used effectively to ensure pupils make good progress in lessons although this is not consistent practice.
- In some lessons observed, feedback engages pupils so they can identify their next steps in learning.
- The influence of religious education can be seen in the high-quality displays in communal areas as well as in the attractive and prominent prayer spaces in each classroom.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Leaders should monitor the curriculum to ensure lessons are varied and creative, and ensure homework is set regularly to inspire and consolidate learning.

B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- Prayer and worship are central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic school. Lessons and staff sessions start with prayer. Displays are bright and informative.
- English Martyrs Catholic Primary school has a good understanding of its role within the diocese and promotes strong links with parents and the parishes it serves.
- Parents are very supportive of the school.
- Respect and value of the individual are central to the school's way of being. Gifts are recognised and celebrated, and pupils are encouraged to share and support each other.
- Pupils have a good understanding of their role in promoting the common good. They have a sound knowledge of the theological foundation for their actions.
- Leadership encourages staff and pupils to deepen their understanding of the distinctiveness of their school. Teachers are offered valuable input on the vision of Catholic education. A generous budget facilitates this training.

The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- Self-evaluation of Catholic life has yet to be fully developed to audit and further develop good practice.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection English Martyrs Catholic Primary School has been successful in ensuring that teachers have sound subject knowledge in religious education. Inspectors observed that teachers used effective questioning techniques that enabled pupils to gain a deepening of understanding of the topics taught. The school has developed an effective whole school feedback policy although this is not yet consistently applied. The school has developed a systematic succession plan for the leadership and management of religious education since the last inspection to include a team approach; however the school has had a high turnover of key personnel and as a result these roles are not yet embedded.

The content of classroom religious education is good

Teachers plan effectively together to ensure that the Curriculum Directory forms the basis of the content for religious education. Teachers ensure that age-appropriate lessons on other faiths are engaging and meaningful for pupils. There are many vibrant displays highlighting other faiths around the school. During this inspection teachers in Key Stage 2 used Bibles effectively to enhance learning and pupils were proficient using Bibles to support their learning. It was clear that scripture is used regularly in lessons. The delivery of the religious education curriculum is mostly structured to ensure progression as pupils progress through the key stages. This is less well developed for more able pupils. Pupils are adept at recalling previous learning and are religiously literate.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupil achievement is good. From looking at books, inspectors observed that pupils take great pride in their religious education books and pupils also know what to do to improve their work. In some year groups, teachers' feedback was used to highlight how work could be improved and pupils responded accordingly, however this is not yet consistent in every year group. Their books show that pupils produce good quality pieces of extended writing although tasks are not always varied to meet the needs of all learners. Pupils have a good attitude to learning, in lessons observed pupils were engaged positively in peer discussion and enjoyed contributing to class discussion. Good progress is made by most pupils, however more able pupils are not effectively challenged, hence their progress is limited. Planning does not always meet the needs of more able pupils. Religious literacy is a strength, pupils confidently discuss their learning, they have good recall of previous learning which they use to make links with topics being discussed in class. In a Year 4 lesson about St. Stephen, pupils were able to discuss his martyrdom and makes links with the English martyrs they had studied previously. Pupils in English Martyrs Catholic Primary School are provided with many opportunities to make links with previous learning and as a result, pupils are confident in their knowledge and enjoy learning.

The quality of teaching is good

Teaching is consistently good, and this results in most pupils making good progress and achieving well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils; inspectors observed the use of effective questioning techniques in some lessons. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and create a positive climate for learning. In a Year 5 lesson observed, pupils were very confident to find Bible references and were encouraged to work independently while the teacher focused on a small group to enhance

their learning. Pupils' responses in a Year 4 lesson demonstrated that they had a clear understanding of previous learning. Pupils were religiously literate and adept at using Bibles to support learning. In a Year 3 lesson a teaching assistant was working effectively to meet the needs of the group being supported. The use of Bibles as a resource is a strength of teaching in Key Stage 2. Teacher subject knowledge is a strength as is how well questioning reinforces prior learning. In Early Years pupils were actively engaged in learning and participated eagerly during teacher input which was age appropriate and stimulating for pupils. Pupils in Reception class were able to recall previous learning about the Last Supper and link it to what the parish priest says at Mass. In Nursery class pupils were learning about Mary and were able to recall that she had her baby at Christmas. However, there were some missed opportunities for consolidation of learning outdoors in Early Years. Activities were not effectively designed to support learning in the religious education topics being studied. Adults did not always use opportunities to develop discussion and to further enhance and consolidate learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

Leadership of religious education has experienced a period of instability; the newly appointed religious education leader is currently on maternity leave and the role is currently being overseen by senior leaders. The school has redesigned the religious education curriculum in response to a period of transition due to staffing instability. The leadership actively supports staff professional development to further teacher subject knowledge and professional expertise in religious education. The school is continuing to develop a clear vision and commitment to its key role in the educational mission of the Church and religious education has a strong influence in this school. Teachers are focused on reinforcing prior learning and pertinent questioning. Teachers work effectively together to improve learning experiences for pupils. Although religious education delivers developmental content, planning is not progressively challenging enough.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Leaders should establish systems and structures to ensure rigorous self-evaluation and include the needs of more able pupils.
- Leaders should monitor the curriculum to ensure lessons are creative and homework is a regular feature to inspire and consolidate learning.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection the school has successfully empowered pupils to prepare, plan and lead worship at age-appropriate levels.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is good

Religious education receives the 10% coverage requirement in all key stages in this school. RE has a good status within the school and within the parent community. The allocated budget is in line with other core subjects. The leadership team including governors are committed to supporting the development of religious education, a generous budget has been set aside to enable staff to receive effective training to teach RE. On entering the peaceful tranquillity of English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, the visitor is drawn to the beautiful garden area where a statue of St. Francis of Assisi has pride of place. A colourful mosaic inscribed with scripture from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 lends a prayerful air where pupils can take time to reflect and enjoy the wonder of nature. Olive trees line the paths and the attention to detail in the gardens set the scene for a prayerful and tranquil start to the day.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is good

Prayer and worship are central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic school. Opportunities are offered throughout the year for pupils to engage in collective worship. Religious education ambassadors help to plan and lead whole school assemblies and take their role very seriously. During this inspection a May altar took prominence in the hall, a statue of Our Lady was adorned with fresh flowers brought in by pupils from all year groups. Pupils who led collective worship addressed all pupils by name, valued their contributions and encouraged everyone to join them at breaktime to pray the rosary. Displays are linked to the liturgical year, attractive, well positioned and inviting. Pupils pray regularly during the school day and pupils from other faiths are given respect; they have opportunities to speak in assembly and share their faith. Pupils from other faiths told inspectors that they feel valued and supported in English Martyrs Catholic Primary School. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is enhanced through times of quiet reflection, discussion and sharing. During an act of worship observed, pupils demonstrated clear familiarity with format, they were particularly affirming when inviting responses and had opportunities to demonstrate good leadership qualities.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is good

Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the Common Good, they know they have made a difference by supporting those in need and they understand the theology behind their actions. They have opportunities to celebrate their many gifts. Pupils are respectful of each other and enjoy celebrating each other's talents. The school actively encourages pupils to give freely of their time and this was demonstrated in their recent successful lobbying with one of the local parish priests to keep Shadwell pool open for the local community. Pupils are ecologically aware and understand the Church's call to action both environmentally as well for justice and peace. They told inspectors that

they make a difference by raising funds for the Catholic Children's Society, CAFOD, The Passage and Lenten boxes. They explained that they do this in a variety of ways, through collections, selling second-hand books, and collecting towels. Pupils clearly articulated that Jesus called his followers to follow in His footsteps and as Catholics they were answering His call to help the poor, the homeless and the marginalised in society. Pupils understood the sacrifice of the English Martyrs and their responsibility to answer Jesus' call to action. They also clearly understood their responsibility to look after the planet; they explained to inspectors that they must reduce rubbish, plant trees and linked their learning about COP 26 with the eco warrior role and their collective responsibility of stewardship.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is good

English Martyrs Catholic Primary School has a good relationship with parents and carers, as well as with the two parishes of English Martyrs Tower Hill and St. Patrick's in Wapping. Local parish priests are regular visitors to the school. Inspectors received positive feedback from parents on the day of the inspection as well as through the parental questionnaire where 56 responses were recorded. Parents informed inspectors that the triangulation between the two parishes and school has been nurtured and good links exist. Parents are appreciative of the work of the parish priests. Good links exist with the diocesan bishop through the Westminster Education Service and the school participates in the many services offered. Parents welcomed the introduction of religious education ambassadors and the opportunities this role entailed. Parents feel welcomed and involved in this school and most feel they are listened to if issues arise. Parents are proud of English Martyrs Catholic Primary School and enjoy the positive responses their children have received from feeder secondary schools regarding their religious knowledge. One parent commented 'at a recent secondary school open evening the teacher was very positive about how much religious knowledge my child had from primary school'. Parents also value the contribution of music to liturgy; one parent commented 'we have a fabulous music teacher who helps bring liturgy alive'. Homework is not set regularly for religious education - something many parents said they would welcome.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is good

The school's mission statement, 'We are special people on a journey, growing and learning together in search of excellence, as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus' informs all policies and aspects of the school's daily life. This school expresses its support for the Catholic mission of education in the way it reaches out to the marginalised; English Martyrs Catholic Primary is an inclusive school. Staff and pupils are encouraged to deepen their understanding of the distinctiveness of this Catholic school. Non-Catholic teachers take part in Diocesan Foundation Stones training where they learn about Catholic beliefs and practices and gain insights into the Catholic faith.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Leaders should conduct a rigorous self-evaluation exercise of its Catholic life to give the school a good understanding of itself as a Catholic school and provide an action plan to address issues arising.
- Ensure that all forms of prayer and worship are planned developmentally.

Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Tower Hill.
- The school serves the parishes of English Martyrs and St. Patrick's in Wapping.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 91%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 2% and from other faiths is 5%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 42%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3.
- There are 12.5% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 6 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 39 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (18%).

Department for Education Number	2113619
Unique Reference Number	100962
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	216
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Edwards
Headteacher	Ms Bronagh Nugent
Telephone number	02077090182
Website	www.englishmartyrs.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Email address	head@englishmartyrs.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 February 2016

Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 8 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 1 act of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Ms Evelyn Ward

Lead Inspector

Ms Catherine Bryan

Associate Inspector

Mrs Geraldine Pears

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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