

Inspection of a good school: English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School, Fenham

Beaumont Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE5 2SA

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2024

Outcome

English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School, Fenham continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Maria Elliott. The school is part of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Anita Bath, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Harrison.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children experience a very positive start to their education in the early years at this school. They settle into the routines and rhythms of school life quickly. Their language skills blossom under the guidance of the welcoming staff.

Pupils are happy at work and play in this calm, orderly and caring school. They behave well in lessons and are eager to acquire new skills and knowledge. Pupils know the types of repeated poor behaviour that constitute bullying. The school deals with the rare incidents of bullying appropriately and quickly. Pupils benefit from the provision for outdoor play and learning during the less-structured times of the school day. They thrive in the school's safe, secure, well-maintained and well-supervised outdoor learning environment.

The school meets the individual needs of its pupils and their families well through its knowledgeable teaching and support staff. All staff are ambitious for the pupils in their care. They follow the school's expectations, its 'Be-attitudes', for teaching and learning. The pupils who attend English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. By the time pupils leave Year 6, they are well prepared for the demands of secondary schooling.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school develops children's speaking and listening skills from their very first day in Nursery. Children listen attentively to rhymes and stories. They learn to identify the

sounds they hear in the indoor and outdoor classrooms. This prepares them well for formal phonics teaching in the Reception Year. The school introduced a new phonics scheme in September 2022. The well-trained staff ensure that pupils, including those who speak English as a first or second language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), apply the sounds they have learned accurately in their reading and writing. The books that pupils take home, to practise reading with their families, are matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils read these books with fluency and confidence. A far greater proportion of the school's pupils achieved the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2023 than in 2022.

The school has developed curriculums in which the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils must learn are sequenced carefully. Many curriculums, such as those for mathematics and geography, are well established. On occasion, gaps in pupils' existing knowledge make it difficult for them to understand the new knowledge being taught. Curriculum champions check on the delivery of their subjects regularly. They identify the next steps for their subjects incisively. For example, the geography champions recently identified the need for pupils to undertake more fieldwork in order to use and apply the knowledge and skills they have learned.

Pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life. Their academic needs are considered and met well. In mathematics lessons, for example, they are supported to access the same curriculum content as their peers. Pupils with SEND, alongside their peers, access the school's occupational therapist, nurse and counsellor. The school works with the local authority's new social, emotional and mental health provision to support pupils to develop positive well-being and self-esteem.

Pupils behave well in and around school. They are safe in school. Pupils know how to work and play safely online. Pupils are enabled to live safely outside of school too. For example, they have recently attended a prevention of knife crime workshop. Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough and too many are persistently absent. These pupils miss too much learning. They do not have the strong foundations on which to build new learning.

Pupils thrive at English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School. They benefit from the many roles of responsibility, such as librarians, school councillors and house captains, that they hold. The pupils in Year 6 support their 'buddies' in the Reception Year. Both year groups benefit from sitting next to each other in assembly on a weekly basis. The school ensures that effective local, national and global citizenship is learned through activities such as recycling, supporting foodbanks and conserving water. Pupils, from the youngest to the oldest, articulate the difference between right and wrong precisely. They have an extensive knowledge of some of the world religions through attending this multi-cultural school in which everyone's backgrounds and talents are recognised and celebrated.

Effective leaders value the staff highly and take appropriate action to manage their workload. The way in which feedback is provided to pupils is 'purposeful and manageable.' New initiatives, such as well-being days, are implemented after consultation with staff. The local governing body supports the senior leadership team's social and emotional needs well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, the school does not have a thorough understanding of the existing gaps in pupils' knowledge. In these subjects, pupils' needs are not met well consistently. The school should continue to refine its assessment procedures to ensure teachers know the curriculum content that needs to be taught next.
- Some pupils do not attend school often enough. These pupils miss important learning and fall behind their friends. The school should continue its work with pupils' families to ensure that their children attend school regularly and make the academic progress of which they are capable.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, English Martyrs' RC Primary School, to be good in November 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148445
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10297526
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	464
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Harrison
Headteacher	Maria Elliott
Website	www.emcps.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school in April 2021. When its predecessor school, English Martyrs' RC Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged good overall.
- This large Roman Catholic primary school is one of 39 schools in Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.
- The school's section 48 inspection of Catholic education is due to take place in the 2024/2025 academic year.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider of education.
- A well-above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The deputy headteacher is head of school for two and a half days each week while the headteacher carries out school improvement work for the trust.
- An occupational therapist, school nurse and counsellor work in the school for one day each week.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, members of the local governing body, representatives from the trust, the acting director of education for the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, and Newcastle local authority's head of school effectiveness.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, geography and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector scrutinised documents, including the trust's report on a recent 'deep dive' into science.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the views of pupils, parents and staff gathered through Ofsted's questionnaires, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Belita Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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