

Inspection of a good school: English Martyrs' Catholic School, A Voluntary Academy

Anstey Lane, Leicester, Leicestershire LE4 0FJ

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2023

Outcome

English Martyrs' Catholic School, A Voluntary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where leaders and staff want the best for their pupils. It is a genuine community, with a caring ethos. The values of the school are woven through every aspect of the life of the school. Pupils take pride in the school and enjoy coming here.

Leaders have established an ambitious curriculum that is tailored to the needs of the pupils. Teachers deliver the curriculum well in lessons. As a result, pupils develop the knowledge and skills that they need for their next stage in learning. Pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 4 is improving over time.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Bullying is rare, and when it occurs, pupils are confident that it will be dealt with. Pupils and staff treat each other with mutual respect. Pupils say that they feel safe in school.

Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities and contributing to the life of the school. For example, sixth-form students mentor and support younger pupils. Pupils take part enthusiastically in activities outside of lessons, such as providing music for school liturgies.

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

Leaders have established a curriculum that is broad and balanced. In each subject, the curriculum plan sets out the key knowledge and how this builds up over time. Planning is detailed. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' understanding and skills. Sometimes, aspects of the curriculum are not as demanding as they could be for the most able.

Leaders continually review and develop the curriculum to make learning relevant to pupils. The enriched curriculum includes additional activities, such as trips and visiting speakers. This helps to make learning more meaningful for pupils.

All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can access a rich diet of opportunities outside of the curriculum. For example, all pupils take part in music performances. Disadvantaged pupils are encouraged and supported to take up instrumental tuition.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND. They study the full curriculum. Teachers make skilful adaptations in class. When necessary, they are well supported by teaching assistants.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They use it well when asking questions to assess pupils' level of understanding. They present information clearly. They model skills well. In lessons, pupils are asked to recall knowledge from previous learning. This helps teachers to check and make sure that pupils remember more over time. However, in some lessons, there are insufficient checks on the quality of pupils' written work. In those subjects, pupils' spelling errors are prevalent, including important subject-based words.

Leaders promote reading for pleasure in a range of ways, including regular DEAR (drop everything and read) sessions. The library has a high profile in school and is used regularly by pupils. Additional support is given to those pupils who enter the school with early reading knowledge and skills. This support is effective. Pupils quickly catch up with their classmates.

Pupils are given effective support when they are considering their next steps. This includes advice about careers and options for post-16 education. Students in the sixth form are well supported in their applications for university.

Teachers have established a strong sixth-form curriculum. It is ambitious and prepares students well for examinations and further study. Sixth-form students play a full role in the life of the school. They are encouraged to take up leadership roles, for example running a book club for younger pupils.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They take part enthusiastically in their learning. Lessons are rarely disturbed by poor behaviour. School is a harmonious community. Leaders track pupils' attendance carefully and provide support where necessary. As a result, attendance is rising, following a dip during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leaders have put an extensive and well-planned personal development curriculum in place. This builds on the school's Catholic ethos and values. The daily form time is used well to deliver and support pupils' personal development. For example, pupils learn about the importance of respect and consent in personal relationships.

Leaders support teachers well. They provide high-quality subject-based training. They take teachers' workload and well-being into account when setting policies, for example by not sending emails outside school hours.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils know there is someone to talk to if they have a problem. They are given opportunities in the curriculum to learn about important issues, such as online safety.

Safeguarding systems and policies are thorough and effective. Leaders ensure that records of concern are detailed and follow up actions are recorded. They carry out appropriate checks when staff are appointed. Staff receive regular and effective training and updates.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum is not always as demanding as it could be. This means that some pupils with high prior attainment do not have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and extend their understanding of some topics. School leaders should ensure that the curriculum meets the learning needs of all pupils, including the most able.
- In some subjects, there are insufficient checks in place to ensure that pupils routinely spell common or subject-specific words correctly. Leaders should ensure that pupils use subject-specific terminology appropriately and that they write with confidence and accuracy.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, English Martyrs Catholic school, to be good in June 2017.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146196
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10254879
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1162
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Paul Lazarus
Headteacher	Mathew Calen
Website	www.englishmartyrs.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school uses the services of five registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in six subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages, music and psychology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to

teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors met with a wide range of senior leaders, including the SEND coordinator and leaders responsible for behaviour and personal development.
- Inspectors met with trust leaders and those responsible for governance.
- Inspectors looked at information about behaviour, attendance and enrichment opportunities.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff.
- Inspectors talked to leaders in charge of safeguarding arrangements. They met with staff and pupils and looked at documentation to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding practices and procedures.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

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