



# English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School Sunderland

URN: 148913

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of Bishop Stephen Wright, Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle

21-22 May 2025

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

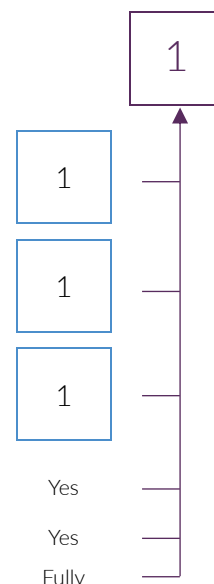
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

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



## Compliance statement

- English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with all requirements of the Diocesan Bishop.
- English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School has responded to and met the area for further development which was identified during the last inspection.

## What the school does well

- The mission statement is known and lived out by all stakeholders. It engenders a strong sense of purpose and a sense of belonging to the school family which leads to excellent relationships, respect and support.
- The strong commitment of staff to the value of religious education as a core subject is evident in their high expectations, aspirations for all pupils and the high quality of pupils' work.
- Pupils at this school make an excellent start in Early Years. They are well-behaved, engaged in their learning and passionate about using their learning in religious education to make a positive difference. This enables all pupils to make good progress throughout the school.
- Pupils prepare and lead prayer and liturgy with knowledge, confidence and reverence and enjoy opportunities to include parents and the wider community.
- Leaders demonstrate strong commitment to the promotion and value of Catholic education and have a clear vision for how their work helps to form pupils who are passionate about making a positive difference.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure greater consistency in the planning, preparation and delivery of prayer and liturgy across the school.
- Develop more forensic self-evaluation strategies in religious education so that subject development targets are more focused, specific and measurable.

## 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

#### Pupil outcomes

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

#### Provision

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

#### Leadership

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



Pupils have a deep sense of belonging to their school. They are proud of their role in revising the mission statement and show a strong commitment to promoting the message to 'love, learn and grow together through Jesus Christ'. Pupils are happy at school, feel safe and respected as unique individuals. They are polite, well-behaved and enthusiastic about school life. Pupils clearly understand what it takes to live out their mission and engage well with activities designed to help them grow in their faith and understanding of how they can make a difference. As one pupil said, 'because we learn about Jesus we behave better'. They understand the demands of Catholic social teaching and live this out in a variety of ways which include supporting charities and initiatives such as Nora's North Pole, the Cafod Live Simply project and links with a local care home. Pupils understand their responsibility to care for the planet and take positive actions to improve areas round the school, including planting and caring for flowers in the school's peace garden and litter-picking in the neighbourhood. Pupils believe that their school is very inclusive where, 'everyone is really welcoming'.

The mission statement is a prominent feature of school life. It is known and lived out by all members of the English Martyrs' community. Staff embrace the mission and enthusiastically support its implementation within the curriculum and across the whole of school life. For example, strong links which deepen pupils understanding are made with Catholic social teaching in the wider curriculum in subjects such as history and geography. There is a lived sense of community and a strong culture of welcome. Many parents, including several families who have recently arrived at the school, commented positively about how well their children have been welcomed and settled into school life. Pastoral care is of the highest level, with the school going the extra mile to support families with practical measures such as a popular uniform swap

facility, subsidised educational visits and promoting access to school activities such as breakfast club. Staff recognise that strong relationships between home and school are a vital part of their mission. The school environment is used well to promote the mission with well-cared for features like the prayer spaces and chapel reinforcing the school's unmistakeably Catholic ethos. The provision for relationship and sex education fully meets statutory and diocesan requirements.

School leaders and governors have a clear vision of the Church's mission and are fully invested in promoting this as a core lived-out leadership responsibility. As a result, all policies and procedures reflect the high priority given to the school's Catholic mission. Strong relationships with parents and the local parish enable the wider community to participate fully in the life of the school. Links with the local parish are particularly strong and the school works effectively with the parish priest to ensure that sacramental opportunities are available for those who wish. The effectiveness of the partnership with parents is evidenced by the highly positive response rate by parents to the inspection survey, where the majority of parents agreed that they know, understand and are supportive of the school's mission. The school engages well with diocesan and Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust's policies, training and activities. Pupils are involved in evaluating Catholic life and contribute to planned improvements. For example, they were closely involved in developing the peace garden. There is an explicit commitment to the physical and mental wellbeing of staff, with a trained mental health first aider being a key source of support for both pupils and staff.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

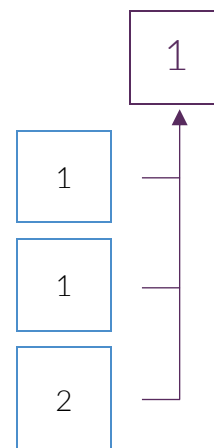
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

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

#### Leadership

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



Pupils achieve well in religious education lessons because they are well-motivated, enjoy their lessons and make good connections between their learning and the wider world. Pupils develop knowledge and understanding over time that fully meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. In Early Years, pupils get off to a great start and respond well to high quality teaching. For example, during a lesson sharing the good news of Pentecost, Reception pupils used a 'phone-line to God' to share their good news. Pupils of all abilities are expertly supported to take a full part in lessons. Pupils are religiously literate because teachers have thought through how to sequentially introduce relevant religious vocabulary. The quality of work in religious education books is consistently exceptional and is at least comparable to that seen in other core subjects. Pupils take pride in their work and work hard to ensure that they meet the high expectations of their teachers. They increasingly show independence and creativity in their work with one pupil stating that he liked religious education because, 'our learning really means something' and he, 'gets to be creative'. Assessment is used to track pupil progress and to enable pupils to know how well they are doing.

Teachers at English Martyrs' demonstrate a deep commitment and high expectations for religious education. They have high levels of authentic subject knowledge, and this is reflected in the exceptional work which pupils produce. Teachers plan highly engaging and creative learning activities that build on prior learning. These include the use of poetry, video, song and scripture. Several lessons were seen during inspection where strong links were made with the theme of a recent celebration of the word, with the Year of Hope and with Catholic social teaching. These links help pupils to make strong moral and spiritual connections between their learning and their lives. Marking and feedback is used consistently across the school. Teachers skilfully use assessment to check on pupils' understanding of the religious education topics

covered. In lessons teachers' questioning probes pupils' understanding and is skilfully adapted to ensure that pupils of all abilities are stretched and challenged. Religious education lessons provide opportunities for pupils to respond in a wide variety of forms of expression which include music, art, drama and role-play and which meet the differing needs of pupils. Some lessons include space for pupils to reflect purposefully on their learning.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Directory* and is sequenced well to meet the needs of all learners. Leaders have high ambitions and ensure that religious education has full parity with other curriculum subjects. The subject leader has a clear vision for religious education and is a strong role-model for other staff. Recent changes within the staff team have meant that leaders have provided professional development opportunities to ensure that all staff have strong subject knowledge, and that newer staff are supported to ensure that the quality of teaching is at least good. Self-evaluation activities are planned and include regular governor monitoring visits. However, development targets for the subject are insufficiently focused and do not accurately identify areas for improvement which will further enhance outcomes. A variety of enrichment activities are provided for pupils to enhance learning. This include working with More Than Dance, the Youth Mission Team and Cafod. Pupils learn about how key themes from all subjects including religious education can apply practically to the wider world. An example of this is how pupils link their care for the planet with their learning about renewable energies at a local car manufacturer.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

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

1

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

#### Leadership

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

2

1

Pupils participate fully, actively and consciously in prayer and liturgy experiences provided by the school. They experience a wide variety of ways to pray in the Catholic tradition. This includes an excellent understanding of how the Church's liturgical year shapes the prayer life of the school. Pupils work well collaboratively with adults and each other to prepare and lead creative and well-constructed opportunities for prayer. They respond with attentiveness, respect and reverence. One pupil stated that, 'I felt like God was closer to me', after a class-based celebration of the word. They know a wide repertoire of hymns and sing with enthusiasm and joy. Pupils relish the opportunity to plan and lead prayer for others, including their parents and parishioners. They can confidently evaluate their experiences of prayer and liturgy and can identify ways in which they can enhance provision. Pupils make strong connections between the ways in which prayer and liturgy are influenced by the curriculum and the wider school life. For example, during the inspection pupils reflected on the call to action arising from a celebration of the word themed on forgiveness.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy is clearly embedded in routine gatherings of pupils, staff and other members of the community. There is a daily pattern of prayer that reflects the rhythm of the prayer life of the Church. Opportunities for informal, formal and creative prayer which reflect the liturgical year are provided. For example, scripture is carefully selected so that all can fully participate. All prayer and liturgy opportunities feature authentic use of the Bible and staff are skilled in supporting pupils to understand the scripture by breaking open the word. Adults are inspiring models of exemplary practice for pupils of all ages. The school environment is used well to promote creative prayer, and the dedicated chapel is a well-used and well-loved resource which is conducive to deeply spiritual opportunities for prayer and liturgy. Parents appreciate opportunities to join their children in prayer at school and at home with Lent, Advent and Bible

prayer bags. A flourishing partnership with the parish enables pupils to participate in the Mass regularly. The parish priest is a valued visitor who enjoys a strong relationship with leaders and who encourages families to be involved in the faith life of the school and their children.

Leaders ensure that the school calendar is planned to ensure that celebration of the Eucharist is offered regularly. They have a secure understanding of the liturgical year. As a result, prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school with holy days and other significant feasts celebrated with Mass, prayer or worship. Although there is a policy for prayer and liturgy, it does not explicitly set out leaders' expectations about the frequency of class-based prayer and liturgy or clarify how pupils' skills of leadership and participation will develop as they progress through the school. As a result, there are some inconsistencies in how often pupils experience class-led worship. Leaders provide support to pupils and staff to plan and lead prayer and liturgy opportunities. As a result, by the time pupils reach Year 6, they are able to plan, lead and reflect with confidence and maturity. For example, a group of Y6 pupils led a moving celebration of the word in the chapel based on The Good Samaritan. They reflected deeply on the call for service to others, and one pupil observed, 'It's what God wants us to do.' The evaluation of prayer and liturgy is embedded in the school's monitoring cycle and the voice of pupils, governors and parents are an integral part of this.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	English Martyrs Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148913
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3943313
Full postal address of the school	English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Redcar Road, Sunderland, SR5 5AU
School phone number	01915488330
Headteacher	Paula Cornell
Chair of local governing body	Darren Hubbard
School Website	<a href="http://www.englishmartyrssunderland.org.uk">www.englishmartyrssunderland.org.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	September 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Michael Ewing  
Martin Gray

Lead  
Team

## 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