



# English Martyrs' Catholic Voluntary Academy

**Address:** Bracken Road, NG10 4DA

**Unique reference number (URN):** 140070

## Inspection report: 25 November 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

### **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

### **How we evaluate safeguarding**

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

## Strong standard ●

### Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Attendance is a high priority. Leaders analyse patterns meticulously and act swiftly to remove barriers. Attendance is above the national average and persistent absence is reducing. Leaders maintain high expectations, challenge absence robustly and work closely with families to secure improvement.

Leaders and staff have established a culture that is highly conducive to learning, in which pupils of all ages flourish. High expectations for behaviour are consistently maintained, and staff act as positive role models. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and warm, creating an environment where pupils feel safe and valued. Across lessons, pupils demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic, focused and keen to give their best. The climate for learning is calm and purposeful.

Clear routines are embedded throughout the school. Pupils respond promptly to instructions and show increasing independence. They understand and live out the school's 4Bs (Be safe, Be kind, Be respectful, Be hardworking), which are reinforced through positive recognition. Tailored strategies are put in place effectively to support pupils who need extra help to manage their behaviour. Playtimes and lunchtimes are orderly and inclusive, with older pupils modelling responsibility.

Pupils are polite, welcoming and proud of their school. Behaviour and attitudes are consistently positive, underpinned by strong routines and unwavering high expectations.

### Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have transformed the curriculum to be ambitious, well designed and carefully sequenced across all subjects. Teaching ensures that pupils build knowledge cumulatively from the early years to Year 6, so pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education. Leaders have developed consistent teaching approaches, such as practising recall, precise feedback and explicit teaching of vocabulary. This coherence enables pupils to retain knowledge securely in their long-term memory.

Teachers demonstrate their deep subject knowledge and apply the school's strategies consistently. They make effective choices about how to present new learning, so pupils grasp key concepts quickly. The teaching of early reading is a clear strength. It ensures that pupils read fluently and spell accurately. Pupils who are developing their early reading skills receive targeted support and keep up well. Strategies to teach writing are embedded successfully. In mathematics, foundational knowledge such as number bonds and mental arithmetic is prioritised and pupils' misconceptions are addressed promptly.

Across subjects, pupils' work reflects the ambition of the curriculum and shows that knowledge deepens over time. Leaders check that teachers put the curriculum in place as well as they intend. They act swiftly to bring about improvements if needed. This well-crafted

curriculum, combined with skilled teaching, ensures that pupils are well prepared for future learning.

## Early years

Strong standard 

Children get off to a positive start in the early years. They learn in a calm, well-organised environment where routines are clear and expectations are high. This helps children feel safe, confident and ready to learn. Children play and learn together happily. They respond well to adults and show growing independence.

The early years curriculum is ambitious and carefully planned. Teachers use their checks effectively to adapt activities so that every child makes rapid progress. Staff model language clearly and encourage children to use talk partners, building vocabulary and social skills. The curriculum helps children to practise and apply what they have learned. For example, children use concrete materials such as cubes and counters to support their understanding in mathematics.

Early reading is a priority. Children learn phonics securely and handwriting is developing through targeted support and finger control activities. Teachers check how children are faring and make timely adjustments. Leaders monitor provision rigorously and work closely with parents and external agencies to meet individual needs. Children, including those who are disadvantaged or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress well from their starting points and leave Reception very well prepared for Year 1.

## Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders have established a highly inclusive culture where ambition for all pupils is clear and uncompromising. Pupils who face barriers to learning, including those who are disadvantaged, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or are known to children's social care, access the same broad and ambitious curriculum as their peers. Staff hold high expectations and make thoughtful adaptations, such as through supportive teaching, so that pupils succeed.

The school applies a step-by-step approach to support pupils with SEND effectively. Staff use of a range of classroom strategies well, which include sound mats, seating arrangements, targeted support and specialist input. Where pupils need more intensive help, leaders work with families and professionals to explore whether further support is appropriate. Staff have the right training. For example, training to support pupils with SEND, English as an additional language (EAL) and speech and language development ensures that staff meet pupils' diverse needs confidently.

Parents, carers and pupils are involved in decisions, and statutory requirements are met fully. The school's strategies to support disadvantaged pupils are evidence-based and complemented by highly effective pastoral provision, including nurture groups and enrichment activities that build resilience and create rich experiences. Provision for pupils who speak EAL is effective and supports pupils to develop their use of the English language rapidly.

Leaders monitor progress rigorously and adjust interventions systematically. Inclusion is central to the school's ethos, ensuring that pupils thrive academically and personally.

## Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders have created a culture of high expectations and ambition that is evident across the school. They have a clear understanding of priorities and take well-judged action to secure improvement. Since the last inspection, leaders have redeveloped the curriculum and introduced assessment systems that are purposeful and reduce unnecessary workload, ensuring that staff can focus on teaching.

Professional learning is a key strength. Leaders provide high-quality training that helps staff teach confidently and effectively. Staff speak positively about the impact of this training, highlighting successful initiatives for improving pupils' writing and spelling. Leaders offer a wide range of career development opportunities, including national qualifications, apprenticeships and bespoke courses tailored to staff's needs. Leaders' approaches support staff's future aspirations, encouraging staff to plan for progression.

Middle leaders play an important role in driving improvement. They monitor their areas carefully, analyse findings and support colleagues to improve practice. Their work has contributed significantly to curriculum development and overall progress.

Staff well-being is prioritised. Leaders have introduced initiatives to ensure that staff feel supported. Governors and trust leaders maintain a clear focus on leader well-being and provide robust support, recognising the demands of leadership roles.

Governance is highly effective and collaborative. Governors and trustees work closely with leaders, using detailed performance analysis to challenge and support improvement. They act decisively when needed and ensure strategies are implemented effectively, having a clear and positive impact on pupils' outcomes and staff development.

## Personal development and well-being

Strong standard 

Leaders have created a well-structured and extensive programme that helps pupils to develop confidence, resilience and the skills they need for life beyond school. Pupils speak with pride about their school and the opportunities it offers.

Pupils learn about respect, fairness and the importance of rules in school and the wider community. Older pupils have a deep understanding of fundamental British values. They can explain ideas such as democracy, liberty and tolerance and give examples of how these apply in everyday life. Some pupils can compare democratic systems with dictatorships, showing impressive depth of understanding.

The school offers a wide range of enrichment activities that broaden pupils' experiences and develop their talents. Trips to places such as the zoo, seasonal visits to Trent College and pantomime performances are highly valued. Pupils enjoy clubs and sporting activities and speak enthusiastically about events such as the Christmas nativity. Leadership roles, including school council, eco team and house captains, help pupils develop responsibility

and teamwork. Pupils understand that these roles allow them to 'give something back' and build confidence.

The school's ethos promotes kindness, empathy and acceptance. Pupils celebrate and respect difference. They understand online safety and healthy relationships. The personal development programme includes lessons on values, wellbeing and self-care. Careers education starts early, helping pupils to carefully think about their aspirations and next steps.

Leaders respond quickly to pupils' needs and provide highly effective pastoral support. This ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are supported well.

Opportunities for cultural, artistic and sporting participation are extensive, and pupils report high engagement. The girls' football club is particularly popular. Overall, pupils develop resilience, confidence and a clear sense of responsibility. They are very well prepared for the next stage of education and life in modern Britain.

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## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education because they develop secure foundations in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. In the early years, phonics is taught very effectively and children are on track for future learning. Targeted support for those at the earliest stages of reading is successful in improving decoding skills.

Across the school, pupils' work reflects high expectations for presentation and handwriting. Pupils progress through the English curriculum well and pupils write for a range of purposes with increasing sophistication. Consistent approaches to writing are embedded securely and supports pupils' literacy development well. In mathematics, pupils grasp key concepts and apply them confidently in other subjects, such as science.

Published outcomes are above national averages overall. However, achievement for disadvantaged pupils remains a priority. Leaders act decisively to close gaps in learning, but progress for this group is not yet consistent over time.

# What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils thrive in the school's caring and supportive environment. This creates a deep sense of belonging and helps pupils to enjoy school life. Attendance is high because pupils feel happy, safe and motivated to learn. Most pupils achieve well across all subjects because staff set high expectations and provide consistently effective teaching. Pupils work hard, take pride in their learning and encourage each other to behave well to meet these expectations. They are ambitious for themselves and for their peers.

Respect and inclusion are central to school life. Staff and pupils treat each other kindly. Everyone is welcomed and valued. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the support they need to succeed. Older pupils act as role models for younger children, and leadership roles help pupils develop confidence and resilience. These opportunities also allow pupils to contribute positively to the school community and prepares them well for future responsibilities.

Children in the early years settle quickly into routines that promote positive learning habits. They enjoy activities that build early reading, vocabulary and social skills, giving them a very positive start. Well-planned provision ensures that children progress well, developing curiosity, independence and a love of learning.

Pupils feel safe and trust staff to help them. Bullying is very rare. Pupils know that any concerns will be dealt with quickly. They consistently behave well. Staff know pupils well and provide the right support so that pupils achieve well over time.

The school works closely with parents and carers to ensure that wellbeing and learning go hand in hand. Regular communication and shared goals ensure that pupils thrive. As a result, pupils leave as confident, caring individuals who are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to improve the curriculum so that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers over time.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kevin Gritton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Noons.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, trustees and governors, including the chairs of the trust and local governing body.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses no alternative provisions.

The school is a catholic school within the Diocese of Nottingham. It had its last section 48 inspection in March 2020.

Headteacher: Gemma Ellis

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### Lead inspector:

Nyree Parker, His Majesty's Inspector


### Team inspectors:

Caroline Poole, His Majesty's Inspector

Shaun Carter, His Majesty's Inspector

## Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 25 November 2025

## School and pupil context

Total pupils

**246**



Close to average

### What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

### School capacity

**270**

Close to average

### What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

### Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

**17.07%**

Below average

### What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

### Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

**1.22%**

Below average

### What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

### Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support



15.45%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and maths measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	61%	Above
2024/25	81%	62%	Above
2023/24	61%	61%	Close to average
2022/23	72%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	74%	Above
2024/25	86%	75%	Above
2023/24	85%	74%	Above
2022/23	77%	73%	Close to average

**Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher assessed writing**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	84%	72%	Above
2024/25	86%	72%	Above
2023/24	83%	72%	Above
2022/23	82%	71%	Above

**Pupils reaching the expected standard in maths**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in maths.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	79%	73%	Close to average
2024/25	92%	74%	Above
2023/24	66%	73%	Close to average
2022/23	82%	73%	Above

**Disadvantaged pupils' performance**

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

**Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	46%	Close to average
2024/25	57%	47%	Close to average
2023/24	43%	46%	Close to average
2022/23	57%	44%	Above

**Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	62%	Above
2024/25	57%	63%	Close to average
2023/24	79%	62%	Above
2022/23	71%	60%	Close to average

**Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher assessed writing**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	71%	59%	Above
<b>2024/25</b>	71%	59%	Above
<b>2023/24</b>	79%	58%	Above
<b>2022/23</b>	57%	58%	Close to average

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in maths.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	61%	60%	Close to average
<b>2024/25</b>	86%	61%	Above
<b>2023/24</b>	43%	59%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>	71%	59%	Close to average

## Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	50%	68%	-18 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	57%	69%	-12 pp
2023/24	43%	67%	-25 pp
2022/23	57%	66%	-9 pp

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	71%	80%	-8 pp
2024/25	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24	79%	80%	-1 pp
2022/23	71%	78%	-7 pp

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	71%	78%	-6 pp
2024/25	71%	78%	-7 pp
2023/24	79%	78%	1 pp
2022/23	57%	77%	-20 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in maths and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	61%	80%	-19 pp
2024/25	86%	81%	5 pp
2023/24	43%	79%	-37 pp
2022/23	71%	79%	-8 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	3.7%	5.1%	Below
2023/24	4.2%	5.5%	Below
2022/23	4.0%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	11.7%	14.3%	Close to average
2023/24	7.9%	14.6%	Below
2022/23	7.2%	16.2%	Below

# Our grades explained

## Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

## Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standards expected of them.

## Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

## Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

## Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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