

# Mortimer St John's C.E. Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109978
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	356662
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 January 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Sadler

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	184
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Young
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Sumner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	West End Road Reading RG7 3SY
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118933 2242
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<b>Email address</b>	office.ms@westberks.org

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 14 lessons and nine teachers and members of staff were observed. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. The school's work and a wide range of documentation were reviewed. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records and pupils' work. Questionnaires from staff and pupils and from 90 parents and carers were analysed and their responses taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which pupils made progress in writing.
- How well teachers ensure that work is challenging for all groups of pupils.
- How effectively the curriculum is tailored to the pupils' differing needs and interests.
- The contribution that teachers with subject responsibilities make to the school's monitoring and evaluation processes.

## Information about the school

St John's is smaller than most primary schools. A large majority of the pupils come from the village of Mortimer though an increasing number come from the surrounding area. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.

The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs. This provision is not managed by the governing body and was not included in this inspection. The school has gained a number of awards, amongst them Artsmark Gold and Healthy School.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

St John's is a good school. The excellence of the headteacher's leadership and management and her dedication to improvement is shared by the staff and the governing body, and all are committed to gaining the best provision and outcomes for the pupils. The good quality provision ensures that pupils achieve well and make good progress in both their academic and personal development.

The school has a warm and inclusive ethos which stems from the outstanding care, guidance and support that is provided. All pupils are known exceptionally well as individuals, and supporting their personal welfare is at the heart of the school's provision. Consequently, the pupils have highly positive attitudes and, when linked to their outstanding behaviour, this helps to create a happy and harmonious community. Pupils also have an outstanding understanding of the importance of adopting a safe and healthy lifestyle, as reflected by the Healthy Schools award. Even the youngest pupils understand the importance of a good diet and exercise and older pupils carefully and accurately considered the relative merits of drinking water or milk!

Pupils enjoy school because the curriculum is carefully planned to build on their interests and stimulate their curiosity. A good balance is secured between developing the pupils' personal and academic achievement, and this prepares them well for the next stage in their education. Teaching is consistently at least good, and sometimes outstanding. Teachers manage the pupils well, provide interesting and stimulating activities and generally match work well to their needs. This is consistently the case in mathematics. In reading and writing, lower and higher ability pupils do well but middle ability pupils sometimes make slower progress because they are not always provided with sufficiently challenging activities. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding. These pupils are catered for exceptionally well, and benefit from excellent individual educational plans that are based on a high quality analysis of need. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Teachers use assessment information well to plan work, though pupils have limited opportunities to assess their own achievements and to check each other's work.

Arrangements to monitor the quality of provision and pupils' attainment are good. All staff play an important role. Teachers with responsibilities are very thorough in checking learning. They analyse progress and teaching well and their good quality evaluations provide a secure range of information to ensure that they make a good contribution to the effective school development plan. This is a good tool for securing further improvement with evaluation being accurate and thorough. Staff work closely as a team and morale is high because all are trained well and given opportunities to take responsibility and to contribute to the school's success. The improvements made in the pupils' personal

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development, the curriculum and aspects of teaching reflect the school's good capacity for further improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Lift the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding by:
  - accelerating the progress of middle ability pupils in reading and writing to match the levels seen in mathematics
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to review and assess their work.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Pupils' enjoyment of learning is one of the first characteristics of the school that impresses the visitor. There are smiles and fun everywhere. This motivates the pupils to produce good work, as shown in the sample of work seen by inspectors. Pupils are keen to become fully involved in the interesting and well-prepared activities that characterised all the lessons seen during the inspection. Teachers ensure that pupils develop their skills of collaboration and independence well.

Pupils enter Year 1 with attainment that is above average in most areas, though until the current year it has been at average levels in communication, language and literacy. The slowest and fastest learners make good progress in lessons in reading and writing because lesson activities are particularly targeted at their needs, but the middle ability pupils sometimes miss out in terms of challenge. In mathematics achievement is outstanding. High standards are attained because teachers are particularly successful in developing the pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding, and are adept at providing good quality practical activities that enable them to apply their learning well. This was evident in a good quality Year 1 lesson where pupils were making estimates of the weight of a range of objects and then comparing estimations to the actual weight. In this well-resourced lesson, there was strong challenge for all groups of pupils. The particularly ambitious challenge for the most able pupils led to them reaching standards more typically expected at the end of Year 4. Current Year 2 pupils are on track to attain standards that are significantly above average. Presentation skills are developed well and the recent school-wide focus on the structured teaching of letters and sounds is starting to pay dividends.

Pupils are proud of their school, enjoy making friends and they feel secure in the supportive environment. This is reflected in their above average levels of attendance. Pupils relish the many opportunities for them to take responsibility. They thoroughly enjoy being members of the influential school council, sunshine buddies to help others in the playground, and also eco warriors.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Good quality teaching is at the heart of the school's drive for sustained improvement. Clear objectives, good quality learning routines, precise questioning and well-prepared support staff are key strengths in teaching. The school's recent emphasis on strengthening pupils' learning is paying dividends and helping them to become independent and confident learners. This is aided by teachers invariably outlining learning objectives and success criteria for activities set. This enables the pupils to know what they are learning and what they need to do to meet objectives. This, in turn, is supported by teachers' constructive marking. The school is aware that there are not enough opportunities for pupils to assess their work. The school provides very well for pupils with learning difficulties, and the excellent new 'sunshine room' is supporting pupils' emotional needs by nurturing some of those whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable.

Topic themes are carefully planned across the whole school to meet pupils' interests, and they build successfully on questions raised by the pupils themselves which they then enjoy investigating. Provision for the arts, particularly art and music, is also strong. For example, a recent collaboration with the nearby Watermill Theatre staff's production of the Snow Queen led to some high quality artwork. The curriculum is enhanced exceptionally well by many visitors, such as the medieval knight who visited during the inspection and provided an excellent range of first-hand medieval artefacts and games to help pupils appreciate the knight's way of life. The school ensures that literacy activities, and to a lesser extent

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numeracy activities, are integrated well into topic themes, but information and communication technology skills are not yet systematically linked to learning across these themes.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The quality of the leadership and management of the headteacher has been pivotal to the school's increasing effectiveness. She is supported well by all staff. There is an excellent focus on securing further improvement to which all staff are committed. The school supports equality and tackles any form of discrimination well. As a result, all groups of pupils make good overall progress.

Governance is good. The governing body works closely with the school and gains good quality monitoring and evaluation information through good links with subject leaders. This enables the governing body to provide a good balance of challenging and supporting the school. It ensures that highly effective care, guidance and support are underpinned by good safeguarding procedures. Site security and safety are a core priority and staff and members of the governing body work effectively together to ensure every pupil is safe.

The school provides a cohesive community and this is strongly promoted within the school and in the local area. Good links and partnerships with outside agencies and other schools nearby, particularly the partner junior school, reflect the school's thorough understanding of local needs. Further afield, good links with a contrasting multicultural school in Reading and shared visits ensure that the pupils gain first-hand experience of a range of other cultures and religions.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes love going to school. They settle in well and quickly develop the confidence and self-esteem necessary to talk with others, whether adult or child. They enter school with skills and knowledge that are broadly at the levels expected for their age. Their progress is good, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. In the past, children's progress in communication, language and literacy has been satisfactory and until last year only a small majority met the expected learning goals. However, a focus on strengthening the teaching of letters and sounds, when linked to an excellent programme to strengthen the children's motor control in writing that is based on dance activities, is boosting achievement. A large majority of children are now on track to meet the expected goals with a few exceeding them. This marks good progress for the current group.

Children talk expressively in lessons about their work and play. In an outstanding lesson, one group had great fun when tracing the movements of the lava from a volcano, making shapes in paint with their hands directly onto a large table. At key moments, the staff give pupils the opportunity to share their achievements with others. This is generally done with confidence and fluency. Children particularly enjoy the good balance that is provided of activities that are directed by the staff and those that they choose for themselves, both indoors and when making use of the generous and well-resourced outdoor space.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The skills of the leader have been recognised by the local authority and she provides support for other schools. The staff work closely as a team, develop warm and strong relationships with parents and carers, and plan activities together well. In addition, the leader checks provision and children's progress well and this has had a positive impact on their achievement in the four terms during which she has been in post.

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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaire, and they were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They were unanimous in responding positively to most of the questions raised. Many made positive comments about how content they are with the school and how happy that they chose the school for their children. The very small number of individual concerns were taken up with the school but followed no particular pattern. Many of the written comments focused on the dedication of the staff, the positive atmosphere and the quality of the leadership of the headteacher. These are summarised by one who wrote: 'The school provides a stimulating learning environment for my child, and the staff have built a supportive and nurturing ethos which matches the level of need for individual children. The headteacher is fantastic, she is approachable and listens to any issues or concerns and then deals with them very well.'

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 184 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	79	19	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	78	20	22	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	44	49	45	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	62	32	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	60	36	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	58	38	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	62	33	37	0	0	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	56	62	28	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	61	35	39	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	52	33	37	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	48	36	40	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	49	54	40	44	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	70	27	30	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



17 January 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Mortimer St John Church of England Infant School, Mortimer RG7 3SY**

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave to us when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing all that you do. We were delighted to see you enjoying the visit from the medieval knight!

You go to a good school. You enjoy learning and the staff make sure that they keep you really safe. Your behaviour is excellent, and the good teaching enables you to make good progress. Those of you who find learning hard are supported exceptionally well and make outstanding progress. Everyone concentrates well and works hard, and you enjoy working together in lessons. You make a good contribution to your school community, and are polite and welcoming to visitors and kind and considerate to those around you. You have an excellent understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Many of you, and your parents and carers, told us how well your headteacher leads your school and we agree. She works really hard to make your school even better. In order to do so, we have asked her to focus on making the teaching even better by doing two things. First, to make sure that everyone makes as much progress in reading and writing as they do in mathematics. Second, to give you more chances to assess your own work.

We hope that you enjoy the rest of your education.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector

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