

Mortimer St Mary's C.E. Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109977
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	378026
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Richardson
Headteacher	Joanna MacArthur
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2007
School address	The Street Mortimer Reading RG7 3PB
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty-one lessons were visited and 10 teachers were observed. Inspectors also held meetings with pupils, staff with key responsibilities and representatives of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation such as: policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' work, and records of their learning and progress. Inspectors analysed questionnaires completed by 87 parents and carers, 13 members of staff and 120 pupils.

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 the school builds on pupils' attainment when they join in Year 3.
- Pupils' attainment in Year 6, including that of the current Year 6, and the impact of teaching and learning on raising attainment.
- Whether initiatives to improve teaching and the curriculum are succeeding and improving pupils' learning and progress.
- The impact of leaders' work at all levels in bringing about improvements in English and mathematics.

Information about the school

This two-form-entry school is average in size for a junior school, and serves the local community and its surrounding area. Most pupils have previously attended the nearby infant school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average and most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities is below average. These pupils' difficulties are mainly emotional and behavioural or they have learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school received an Ofsted Interim Assessment in July 2010 which deferred inspection.

The headteacher has led the school since January 2011. The school is implementing the International Primary Curriculum. The school's awards include Quality Mark, Artsmark Gold and National Healthy Schools status. An after-school club is held on the school's site and pupils are also eligible to attend a breakfast club at the nearby infant school. Both of these are privately managed and, as such, are not part of this inspection.

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

Mortimer St Mary's is a good school. It has improved considerably and continues to do so at a rapid pace. The learning environment and curriculum inspire learning, and pupils talk about how much they enjoy the new curriculum. The school's success is due to the very strong leadership and management of the headteacher, and the ambition of other senior leaders and staff to improve teaching and learning and pupils' achievement. Pupils are kept and feel exceptionally safe, and flourish both academically and personally. Good provision of teaching, the curriculum, and care, guidance and support all contribute to pupils' good behaviour and achievement. Nevertheless, the school recognises that it does not provide its pupils with enough opportunities to develop a real understanding of the diverse groups that make up the United Kingdom.

The attainment of pupils in Year 6 is rising and is close to high in reading, writing and mathematics. However, slightly fewer boys reach the expected levels in reading and writing than do so in mathematics, and slightly fewer girls achieve higher levels in mathematics than do so in English. The new literacy curriculum fully engages them. This has led to much improvement in the quality of their reading and writing. By Year 6, pupils write very well for a range of purposes using imaginative vocabulary. However, a few pupils are below average in reading and writing, and do not apply phonic skills (the sounds that letters make) properly. In mathematics, a minority of pupils across the school do not have multiplication facts at their finger tips, which slows their mental arithmetic skills.

Pupils' progress is good overall as a result of much good teaching. The last remnants of a past legacy of underachievement are swiftly being eradicated, but a few inconsistencies remain where teaching is not above satisfactory. In the best lessons, pupils are given plenty of opportunities to be active, and to discuss and reflect on their own learning and that of peers. However, this does not happen consistently when adults talk too much during overlong introductions. Assessment is accurate and used well to plan most lessons. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not make the best use of assessment so that the challenge for the more able slows or the work is too hard for the less able. The quality of support provided by teaching assistants is variable and they are not always deployed to best effect.

The headteacher has introduced robust school self-evaluation and monitoring systems which include a strong focus on improving teaching. Leaders at all levels are now involved in checking pupils' progress. This has led to leaders and the governing

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body knowing the school's strengths very well and what is needed for further improvement. Together with staff, they systematically use the assessment systems to measure accurately patterns in pupils' progress, and identify and address any gaps towards meeting demanding targets. Systems for ensuring pupils attend school regularly have been stepped up and this has led to a rise in attendance rates and better progress for a few pupils who were persistent absentees. The governing body is well led by a knowledgeable Chair of the Governing Body. This year, the governing body has improved its skills for evaluating the impact of the school's provision on pupils' progress. The recent rapid rate of all-round improvement, including in pupils' attainment, and the determination of staff and the governing body to provide the very best education possible, show the school has good capacity for sustaining improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by July 2012 by:
 - ensuring girls attain as highly in mathematics as in English and all boys achieve as well in reading and writing as in mathematics
 - enabling less-able pupils to consistently apply their phonic skills to reading and writing, ensuring reading activities are not too hard for them
 - improving pupils' mental skills in mathematics by addressing any gaps in their knowledge of multiplication facts.
- By July 2012, ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better so that the learning and progress of every pupil is equally good by:
 - refining the use of assessment in the few situations where work is not consistently matched to all pupils' abilities
 - ensuring lesson introductions are never overlong and every teacher uses a balance of approaches, including investigative learning
 - deploying teaching assistants so that they have a positive impact on learning.
- Raise pupils' awareness of the wide range of cultures and traditions within the United Kingdom by forging links with local schools that have a more diverse intake.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Lesson observations, the evaluation of tracking data on pupils' progress and examples of their work show that their progress is good and accelerating. The school is building well upon pupils' above-average attainment on entry to the school. Pupils are articulate, very keen to learn and thrive on challenge. In literacy lessons, stimulating reading texts are consistently used well to underpin writing. Pupils develop their evaluative thinking skills particularly well through literacy and the broader curriculum. This was seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson where pupils, after reading books by a well-known children's author, evaluated the techniques used in

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narrative writing to capture the reader's interest. Pupils apply their literary understanding very well to writing. Excellent progress in creative writing was seen from more-able pupils in Year 6 and pupils' overall writing attainment is close to high in Year 6.

However, this good quality of learning is not consistent throughout the school. While there is some good learning in Year 5 due to good teaching, the school is fully aware that not all classes in this year group consistently build well on pupils' existing skills.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well, overall. The school has rightly identified that a few have literacy and numeracy needs because of earlier underachievement. It is providing interventions to support these pupils, while recognising that better teaching is the key to securing appropriate achievement. In a few lessons, lower-ability pupils are held back when they are not given enough opportunities to apply their phonic skills to reading and writing, and reading activities are too hard for them. Those with emotional and behavioural difficulties are helped well and incidents of poor behaviour are extremely unusual.

Pupils' knowledge of how to keep themselves safe is exceptional. They reported no bullying and trust adults to deal with any that might occur. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, especially the spiritual dimension. This is revealed in their understanding of personal values, their art work and increasing sense of wonder at human achievement. Pupils work together well in small teams and are developing good decision-making and problem-solving skills. Their behaviour is often excellent around the school. Pupils behave well at all times but their concentration occasionally wanders when their work lacks challenge. Pupils help in many ways, including in their duties as school councillors and when raising money for charities. Reflecting the school's National Healthy Schools award, pupils show good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Their well-developed literacy and numeracy skills, good attendance and business and enterprise activities prepare them well for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

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

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The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are often skilled at making learning interesting for pupils, who understand and respond well to high expectations set for behaviour. Whiteboard technology, computers, real experiences and practical resources are used successfully to make lessons interesting. Expectations of pupils' learning are often high and pupils are usually enabled to develop their independent-learning and problem-solving skills as well as learning through listening and watching. These elements were seen in a good Year 3 literacy lesson which led to pupils writing play scripts. The teacher enabled pupils to identify different forms of writing from the reading of well-chosen play scripts. Exploratory work in small teams helped pupils to learn from each other as they picked out different styles of writing – for example, stage directions – and applied their understanding of adverbs. Planning and teaching methods usually reflect pupils' different learning needs well. However, in the few lessons where teaching was not above satisfactory, learning tasks were not fully adapted to meet pupils' needs, or there was too much instruction and not enough opportunities for pupils to investigate and learn from each other.

The innovative curriculum embeds the key skills of literacy and numeracy well while developing pupils' academic, personal and international learning across a range of subjects. The cross-curricular themes are exciting and motivate pupils to learn. They are lifting all pupils' interest in learning and, through independent research and problem solving, providing challenge for all, including the most-able pupils. Themes such as 'chocolate' enable pupils to develop their academic research, for example, in geography. Pupils also applied both art and design and science when, in small teams, they designed small chocolates to sell for an enterprise activity. The curriculum topic sacks, which include reference materials, contribute well to home learning. However, homework systems for pupils to learn multiplication facts are not fully implemented in some classes. Information and communication technology is used well to enable pupils to learn. Year 6 pupils are currently very interested in their topic about world leaders and different forms of government. The school is, currently, developing the way mathematics problem solving is taught and is about to review provision for gifted and talented pupils.

The impact of good care and guidance is evident in pupils' welcoming behaviour and their very good relationships with adults and peers. Careful consideration is given to planning for transition between classes and when pupils transfer from the infants and

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to their secondary schools. Links with other professionals and agencies beyond the school are particularly effective in promoting pupils' well-being, including for the few pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership which is underpinned by a determination to pursue constant improvement. The new leadership structure is empowering leaders at all levels so they can play a full part in raising achievement. Middle leaders are taking an increasingly significant role in raising attainment, including providing guidance to colleagues and monitoring assessments across the whole school. They are now developing their ability to monitor the quality of teaching by observing lessons and have already monitored initiatives such as guided reading across the whole school. Improvement plans provide clear priorities to address any perceived weaknesses. The monitoring and evaluation of staff performance is thoroughly applied and staff are held to account for pupils' performance. The governing body has developed its strategic role and is holding the school to account with increased skill. Members are currently reviewing responsibilities so they can use their skills to best advantage for supporting, as well as evaluating, the work of the school.

Parents and carers are well informed and participate actively in promoting pupils' achievement. Partnerships with the church, other agencies and local sports partnerships promote learning and well-being effectively. Safeguarding arrangements are robust. They are given high priority and implemented rigorously, including in the recruitment of staff, first aid, child protection and site security. This is affirmed by the high degree of endorsement from parents and carers in the questionnaires returned and pupils' unequivocal view that they feel safe. The school is vigilant in tackling discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity well. It recognises that further work is required to develop the consistency of provision for less-able pupils in literacy and is keen to quickly lift their attainment. The school has strong, cohesive links with its local community but has not explored to any great extent the diverse cultures and traditions that now make up the United Kingdom. Consequently, community cohesion is not yet good. Nevertheless, pupils' positive development of personal values – reflected in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development – reflects the positive values within the school and supportive local community. The school is already well on the way to promoting and extending pupils' understanding

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from a national perspective.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of those parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire responded positively about the work of the school. Parents, carers and pupils are unanimous in their views that the school is a safe place to be. The very large majority say that they are very happy with their children's experience at school and that their children enjoy attending. Inspectors endorse their views that the school keeps their children safe, that they are happy there and are developing good attitudes to learning. Many positive parental comments were received, particularly about the good leadership of the headteacher and the good impact of the changes to the curriculum on their children's learning. Most parents and carers are pleased with their children's progress. However, a very small minority feel there are some inconsistencies in teaching affecting pupils' progress. During the inspection, the inspection team found pupils' progress is mainly good and senior leaders are tackling the few remaining inconsistencies in teaching to ensure pupils make consistently strong progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mortimer St Mary's C.E. Junior 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 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 235 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	60	35	40	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	67	29	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	25	57	66	6	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	31	51	59	6	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	41	48	55	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	23	62	71	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	31	54	62	3	3	0	0
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)	32	37	44	51	4	5	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	30	51	59	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	24	52	60	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	22	53	61	4	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	25	29	52	60	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	39	46	53	3	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

23 November 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Mortimer St Mary's C.E. Junior School, Reading, RG7 3PB

Thank you for making us so welcome and for helping us with the inspection when we recently visited your school. Your views are important as your learning depends on the education you get there.

First, you need to know your school gives you a good education. Here are some of the many things your school does well.

- You make good progress and, by Year 6, your attainment is close to high in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You have many exciting learning opportunities and you told us how you much you love the new curriculum.
- You are enthusiastic learners and are developing your thinking skills well.
- You behave well and get on very well with each other. This makes your school a happy place.
- Your teachers are good at making your lessons interesting.
- Staff take very good care of you and you told us how very safe you feel at school.
- Your headteacher leads you very well and all the staff and the governing body think very carefully about what is best for you.

This is what we are asking your school to do to improve.

- Make sure all girls and all boys do equally well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Help a few of you to use phonics (the sounds that letters make) better for reading and writing, and all of you to make sure you know your multiplication facts.
- Help your teachers to always plan activities for you that build on what you already know.

Well done to the few of you who have had to improve your attendance. Please keep this up. We hope you will all continue to enjoy school and carry on working hard in all you do, including improving your mental arithmetic skills.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick
Lead inspector

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