

Inspection of a good school: Mortimer St John's C.E. Infant School

West End Road, Mortimer, Reading, Berkshire RG7 3SY

Inspection dates:

10–11 December 2019

Outcome

Mortimer St John's C.E. Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Mortimer St. John's are enthusiastic and confident learners. When children start in Reception they receive a high level of care. This helps them settle quickly, feel secure and make a positive start. The school's Christian ethos is reflected in the strong relationships between pupils and staff.

Leaders and teachers set high standards for behaviour and learning. They want pupils to grow up to become increasingly responsible. Pupils are passionate about the environment. They work hard in lessons, enjoying their learning. Teachers make every effort to make sure that lessons are engaging. Pupils say, 'We are always doing exciting things.' Pupils from an early age have opportunities to practise basic skills so that they remember their learning.

Pupils play a full role in their school and community. They enjoy strong relationships with their friends, feel happy and safe. They take pride in their work and enjoy achieving. Pupils behave well because they know that if they do not it will affect their learning. They like receiving awards for good behaviour. Pupils look after one another, showing care and sensitivity. Like their parents, they have no concerns about bullying. There is always an adult to talk to if they are worried.

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

Leaders have maintained a good standard of education since the previous inspection. Leaders want the very best for pupils. They have a coherent vision, which is ambitious and uses topics well to develop skills from different subjects. Leaders and teachers are largely successful in making sure that pupils learn the right things in the right order. This, together with a focus on pupils' independence and making lessons exciting, ensures that pupils' learning is effective.

Lessons are well planned so that pupils in the same year group have the same learning experiences. The sequence of learning ensures that there are plenty of opportunities for

pupils to practise their skills. This means that they learn deeply and remember more. Leaders and teachers have looked closely at pupils' learning from Reception to Year 2. Teachers carefully check what pupils can already do. Tasks are carefully designed to extend their learning further. In Reception, teachers focus on children recognising and correctly writing numbers. Children are encouraged to repeat tasks to be secure before moving on.

Senior leaders are now planning how pupils can learn even more over time. They know that the sequence of learning in individual subjects can be even better. Subject leaders, some of whom are new to post, need training to be able to complete this work. Governors are also looking to develop their skills so they can support leaders to keep the school moving forward.

Phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is well taught in the school. Pupils in Year 1 reach higher standards than those achieved nationally. Children in Reception start learning their sounds straight away. Regular practice helps them to remember and commit the sounds to memory. This further develops in Year 1 and 2 so that pupils become confident and fluent readers. When reading, pupils effectively use their phonics to decipher unfamiliar words. Any pupils that begin to fall behind in their reading are quickly identified. They are given extra help to catch up before they lose confidence.

There are very few instances of misbehaviour because pupils enjoy their learning so much. They enjoy lots of different subjects and demonstrate good skills. In music, which I looked at in detail, pupils do well. In Year 2 pupils were playing glockenspiels. They were accompanying a song, following the tempo and varying the pitch. I saw similarly strong practice in mathematics. Teaching is well structured and builds pupils' confidence. Pupils have a good understanding of number and apply their skills well. Teachers ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are confident in their learning. Teachers make sure that the work set matches their ability. SEND pupils are encouraged to join extra activities such as agility club. This helps build confidence that they can then apply to their learning when in class. Daily reading through the school's catch-up programme has proved very effective in helping these pupils achieve as much as they can.

Teachers promote good learning in lessons through the school's 'learning gems'. Pupils are awarded gems for having a go or reflecting on their learning. Pupils like this approach; they recognise the behaviours that help them learn. It is helping them to act and think independently.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a priority in the school. This is evident in the high rates of parental satisfaction with the care pupils receive. Leaders have developed a strong safeguarding culture. Staff recognise that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. There are good procedures in place to ensure pupils' safety. Because of the training they have received, staff are confident to take the right actions if a safeguarding issue arises. The school

works effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the help they need. Parents say they go 'above and beyond'.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has looked closely at the curriculum it is offering to the pupils. This has focused on the sequence of learning within topics or projects and within some discretely taught subjects, such as mathematics. Senior leaders are sensibly planning training for subject leaders to boost the quality of the wider curriculum still further.
- The new governing body are keen to play their part in monitoring leaders' work to develop the curriculum still further. They recognise that they need help to improve their skills to monitor more effectively the implementation and impact of the curriculum action plan.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Mortimer St John's C.E. Infant School to be good on 13–14 January 2011.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil

premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	109978
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10111289
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Bourne
Principal	Nicola Sumner
Website	www.msj.w-berks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 February 2016

Information about this school

- Mortimer St. John's C.E. Infant School is smaller than the average-sized school.
- The school has recently federated with St. Mary's Junior School under one governing body.
- The former headteacher is now the executive principal of the two schools. Mortimer St. John's appointed a head of school in September 2019.
- As a school with a distinctive Christian ethos, the school was last subject to an inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in January 2016, when it was judged to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- All year groups were visited by the inspector, always accompanied by the executive principal. During visits to lessons I talked to pupils about their work.
- I met with senior leaders, the governing body including the chair, and a representative of the Diocese of Oxford. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- I did deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics and music. This involved

meeting leaders who are responsible for these subjects and visiting lessons to observe learning. Meetings were held with pupils to talk about their learning and with teachers to discuss pupils' understanding.

- I gathered a range of evidence regarding safeguarding, including from discussions with parents, pupils and staff, training logs and safeguarding records.
- In addition to meeting six parents, 26 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 written responses, were considered. I also took account of the views of 11 staff via the staff survey.

Inspection team

Bill James, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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