

Inspection of Marlow Church of England Infant School

Sandygate Road, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 3AZ

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love learning to be active citizens and leaders. From art ambassadors to play leaders, pupils thrive on giving back in their school. They know that their voices are heard by staff here. Pupils also contribute to the wider community through environmental projects and charitable initiatives. In these, as in all areas of school life, leaders make sure that every pupil is included. As a result, disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit strongly from everything the school provides.

The school's ethos encourages all pupils to aim high. These aspirations lead to exceptional learning in early years and in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils think about how they can overcome challenges and learn from them. In Reception, children develop curiosity and an inquisitive approach to learning. Staff nurture this through outdoor learning and exploratory projects. This means that even the youngest children in the school build great perseverance.

Pupils are committed to the school's values, as set out in the school and class charters. They learn how to be caring and kind and how to cooperate with one another. Whether in the classroom or the playground, pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

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

Pupils develop their reading and mathematical skills exceptionally well. In early years, children develop their understanding of phonics swiftly. They read carefully chosen books fluently and with confidence. Teachers embed pupils' understanding of important mathematical knowledge, such as number bonds. Pupils then revisit and deepen this learning over time. As a result, they learn to reason and solve problems for themselves. Pupils' strong start in reading and mathematics is reflected in published outcomes. It also means that they are well prepared for the transition to junior school.

The school has mapped out what and how it wants pupils to learn. In early years, staff design creative and purposeful activities. As children are engaging with these, staff introduce new vocabulary to broaden learning. Teachers support pupils with SEND to access the full breadth of learning. Some pupils receive pre-teaching sessions or work in quieter spaces. Pupils with SEND achieve highly.

In most aspects of the curriculum, teachers provide precise and effective explanations. They provide tasks that enable pupils to explore and absorb new ideas. Teachers pick up on and correct pupils' misconceptions. For example, teachers check that pupils achieve accuracy when drawing symmetrical shapes. In some subjects, teachers' explanations or checks for understanding are not as precise. At times, they are not fully focused on the crucial knowledge that pupils need. Therefore, in some parts of the curriculum, pupils' learning is more variable.

The school makes highly effective use of assessment information. Leaders review this carefully alongside input from staff and parents and carers. This helps the school to identify pupils' potential SEND accurately. Teachers also use assessment to adapt and refine how they teach. For instance, teachers check for every pupil's grasp of sounds and letters. This enables staff to provide highly targeted support for pupils who need it. All pupils, including those with SEND, become confident readers as a result.

The school works closely with families to help maximise pupils' attendance. Leaders understand the potential causes of absence and how to address these. As a result of the school's actions, pupils' attendance and punctuality are very high. Alongside this, the school emphasises supporting pupils to think and learn independently. As a consequence, pupils develop determination and motivation to learn. In classrooms and playground spaces, pupils' conduct reflects their commitment to learning. Strong attendance, combined with excellent behaviour, contributes greatly to pupils' learning.

Character and leadership development sits at the heart of the school's approach. Pupils learn about and lead on issues such as environmental action, faiths and culture. The school ensures that disadvantaged pupils take full advantage of this. The opportunities provided by the school enrich pupils' experiences. Staff help children in early years to become aware of their emotions. This helps children to regulate themselves and learn effectively. Pupils know how to keep themselves and each other safe. They are well equipped for life in school and the world beyond.

The school's connection with its community enhances the experience of all pupils. Staff keep parents informed and engaged in each step of their child's learning. In the school, leaders and governors give careful thought to managing workload. They take account of the views of staff as part of an open and supportive culture. This helps staff to feel motivated to strengthen and improve the education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching in a few subjects is not designed precisely enough to help all pupils to remember the content that they have been taught. As a result, there are variations in how securely pupils learn the intended curriculum in these subjects. Leaders should make sure that teaching in all subjects matches the high standards seen in the strongest subjects.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	110433
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10287848
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	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mark Skoyles
Headteacher	Sharon Reynolds
Website	www.marlow-infant.bucks.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 March 2011, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- Marlow Church of England Infant School is a Church of England voluntary-aided school. Its most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in May 2016. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before June 2024.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, including the headteacher. The inspector also spoke with a representative from Buckinghamshire local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Oxford.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum and provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, governors, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts the pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Daniel Botting, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lea Hannam

Ofsted Inspector

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