



# Mortimer St Mary's CofE Junior School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 109977  
**Local Authority** West Berkshire  
**Inspection number** 288554  
**Inspection dates** 29–30 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Olson Davis

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior	<b>School address</b>	The Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Mortimer
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11		Reading RG7 3PB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01189 332491
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	222	<b>Fax number</b>	01189 331013
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs J Carpenter
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr R Green
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 May 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
7–11	29–30 January 2007	288554

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school serves an area of comparative advantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The large majority of pupils is of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is average but the proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs (SEN) is higher than average.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well and show confidence and enjoyment in their learning. The effective leadership team works closely with the staff to place the needs of pupils at the centre of what the school does. This has a beneficial impact on pupils' achievement and personal development. The school justifiably enjoys the confidence of parents. One wrote, 'We are lucky and privileged to have a school that has such good facilities and such a caring and committed staff within our community'. Standards are above average, with a good proportion of pupils exceeding the levels expected of eleven-year-olds in the national tests. Recently some boys have done less well in writing than they should. As a result of prompt and effective action by the school, boys' achievement in writing is rapidly improving.

Pupils achieve well because they are well taught and motivated by a wide range of interesting and challenging tasks which inspires them to work hard. Fundamental to pupils' good progress is teachers' effective use of regular and careful assessments to set work that is well matched to pupils' varying needs and abilities. This is particularly strong in English, mathematics and science and teachers' effective marking enables pupils to understand clearly how well they are working and what they must do to improve. An important feature of teaching and learning is the good relationships between teachers and pupils. As a result, pupils show positive attitudes to their learning. Classrooms are calm and purposeful places because pupils follow the teachers' lead. They treat each other with respect and show concern for each others' feelings. Pupils develop excellent collaborative skills which, coupled with their good basic skills, prepare them well for the next stage of their education. A good curriculum meets the needs of learners and is particularly successful in supporting those pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and learning difficulties (LDD). Teachers are beginning to make links between subjects and this often makes learning come alive for the pupils. However, approaches to planning this type of work are not yet coherent across all subjects.

The pupils' personal development is good. They are making sensible life-style choices. They eat healthily and participate regularly in sport and exercise. Pupils take good care of one another and behave excellently. The school council appreciates its responsibilities, and members feel that they have an important part to play in representing the views of their classmates to the staff. There are strong links with the local community, and especially the church. However, opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of the social and cultural diversity of twenty-first century Britain are insufficiently developed.

The headteacher and senior management team provide good leadership for the staff team. They have a keen appreciation of what the school does well and where it needs to develop. Prompt actions to improve performance in boys' writing and girls' mathematics are good examples of the school's capacity to improve further. Leadership and management roles are distributed appropriately across the staff team. Subject leaders offer good support and advice to colleagues throughout the school. However, with the exception of the English and mathematics subject leaders, their broader role

in monitoring standards and the quality of teaching has only recently commenced. The governing body carries out its duties assiduously and has a secure oversight of the work of the school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop the role of subject leaders to ensure that each has proper oversight of standards and the quality of teaching in their subject across the school.
- Review curriculum planning to allow teachers greater opportunities to forge links in pupils' learning between the different subjects of the National Curriculum.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop a keener awareness of the cultural diversity of British society.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

From broadly average starting points pupils achieve well and reach above average standards at the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress in lessons because of good teaching and their positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in the national test results, which have generally been above average in recent years. The school's detailed analysis of test results showed that some boys were underperforming in writing and too few girls were attaining the higher level 5 in mathematics. Achievement in both areas is improving because of successful interventions by the school. Pupils are benefiting from well-planned opportunities to write for real purposes and from focused target setting in English. Recent changes to the mathematics curriculum allow teachers to match work more closely to the abilities and interests of pupils encouraging them to make more rapid progress. The school successfully meets its challenging targets and has set similarly challenging targets for 2007. Pupils with LDD and SEN make good progress because they are very well supported by skilled learning support assistants.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

One of the key strengths of the school voiced by members of the school council is that, 'As soon as you join St. Mary's you know you are welcome'. Inspectors agree. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy almost every day. They are realistic enough to acknowledge that there are occasional spats and arguments, but often as not can sort these out for themselves. On the rare occasions that there are more serious problems they express confidence in the support and actions of their teachers and headteacher. There are strong and positive links between home and school. The high expectations of the school and the shared aspirations of most families are reflected in the pupils' excellent behaviour and attendance.

Taken overall, the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Opportunities for pupils to be still and reflect on their lives and experiences are evident both within daily worship and in the development of quiet areas within the school's

grounds. Pupils are regularly involved in fund raising for charities to support others less fortunate than themselves. Despite a good breadth of cultural activities in art, music and drama, current provision does not do enough to help prepare pupils for life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The staff team present positive role models to their pupils. As a result relationships in classrooms are cordial and pupils motivated to work hard and do their best. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and there is a generally secure match between the tasks set and the capabilities of the pupils, especially in English and mathematics. This is because teachers know their pupils well. They set challenging targets and mark pupils' work carefully to check their progress towards these. For instance, in Year 6 there has been careful and successful attention to improving the participation and achievement of girls in mathematics.

Learning support assistants benefit from regular training and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. This is especially true of the sensitive and focused support provided for pupils with SEN and LDD, as well as extension activities for those who are gifted and talented.

Occasionally teachers talk for too long at the start of a lesson and their questioning of pupils is too cursory to probe understanding and deepen knowledge. Even so, teaching and learning are good. Most teachers are skilled practitioners and one or two demonstrate an excellent ability to think on their feet, modifying the pace and direction of a lesson in the light of the pupils' response.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum that meets the needs and interests of the pupils. Teachers are responsive to needs of different groups. For instance, in English there has been careful attention to setting a wider range of writing activities that appear to be successfully motivating the boys to write more adventurously and at greater length. In most classes there are signs that teachers are beginning to develop links between subjects in order to make learning more exciting. Work on the history of ancient Egypt in Year 3 has been enlivened by the design and construction of cardboard models of sarcophaguses. However, current curriculum plans tend to focus largely on developing pupils' skills and knowledge within separate subjects and lack an overarching framework. This hampers the further development of the types of thematic work that can add relevance to pupils' learning and deepen their understanding.

A wide range of educational visits and visitors to school add valuable breadth to the school's curriculum. Many pupils benefit from participation in the good variety of sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities provided during the course of each

day. This includes specialist sports and instrumental tuition. Plans to introduce the teaching of modern foreign languages are well-advanced.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its pupils. Staff follow rigorous systems for child protection and health and safety. Good relationships between adults and children inspire trust and confidence. As a result pupils feel safe and say that there is an adult to turn to if they have a problem. The school's good induction procedures and close links with the infant school help pupils to settle quickly. The school works very well with outside agencies to provide for its pupils, particularly those with LDD and SEN. Their needs are assessed at an early stage and effective intervention programmes put in place to meet them. Pupils appreciate the help that teachers give them through their marking. Older pupils say that the targets teachers set in English and mathematics help them to know where they are in their learning and what needs to be improved. Targets are not always specific enough in some other subjects for pupils to know what exactly they have to do to get better.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides clear direction for the school ensuring a sharp focus on raising standards and promoting good standards of care for pupils. There is a strong sense of teamwork which has a significant impact on pupils' achievement and well-being.

The school's self evaluation is good. School leaders make skilled use of data to identify areas of underperformance and take prompt and effective action to put things right. These priorities are set out clearly in the well considered school improvement plan. The headteacher checks the quality of teaching on a regular basis and is supported in this work by the leadership team and the subject leaders for English and mathematics. However, these aspects of leadership and management are less well developed for the other subjects of the National Curriculum.

The school's use of well-focused training and professional development has raised teacher expertise in key areas such as assessment and the teaching of writing. Governors are supportive and offer good challenge in the way that they monitor the work of the school and hold it to account.





## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you and took careful note of what you and your parents had to say about the school. We were particularly impressed by how well you respect and care for one another.

Yours is a good school. Here are a few of the many good things about your school:

- the headteacher and governors run the school well; they are clear about what needs to be done to improve the school
- you do well in your work. You learn a lot in your lessons because the teaching is good and you want to do your best
- you are well cared for by the adults in school and this helps you to feel safe
- you all benefit from the many interesting activities and experiences that the school provides for you.

There are three ways in which we have asked the school to improve even further:

- develop the management skills of teachers who are in charge of particular subjects. This will help them to check that things are going well in their subjects and that you are making good progress
- get teachers to look for links between subjects to make learning more relevant and meaningful for you
- help you to appreciate further the variety of races and cultures that make up our society.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your school. We also hope that you will help your teachers as they work hard to make your school even better for you.

Yours sincerely,

Olson Davis

Lead Inspector