

Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109978
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	288555
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Christopher Grove

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Warwick
Headteacher	Mrs J N Sumner
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002
School address	West End Road Mortimer Reading RG7 3SY
Telephone number	0118 933 2242
Fax number	0118 933 1163

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, principally moderate learning difficulties and autism, has grown and is now above average. The school has Investor in People status, has the National Healthy Schools Award, and has secured Arts Mark (Bronze).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mortimer St John's Infant is a good school. The ethos of the school is based on firmly held Christian principles about the value of each child, and is consequently warm and caring, so that pupils are happy and thrive. The school has a good partnership with parents, who welcome the focus on pupils' personal as well as academic development. Not surprisingly, therefore, all respondents to the parental questionnaire agreed that their children enjoy school, and that they are well cared for. One parent wrote 'I am very happy for my son to attend St John's. It is a lovely school with a great atmosphere.' Another expressed her '...absolute delight with how happy both children have been at the school'.

The inclusive ethos and good quality of pastoral care result in pupils' good personal development, including their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are well behaved and attentive to their teachers and other adults. They are well-mannered and friendly towards other pupils. In the Foundation Stage classes, pupils develop good levels of independence. However, at Key Stage 1, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to build on this independence through positive contributions to the school. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use their initiative in lessons, or to exercise responsibility around the school.

Pupils' achievement is good. When they join the school, their attainment varies from year to year but is broadly average. Progress in the Foundation Stage is good, and continues to be so at Key Stage One. At the end of Year 2, standards have been above average in each of the last three years, and significantly so in 2007, notably in reading and mathematics. Results in writing, though also above average, were not as good, principally because fewer pupils attained the high Level 3 standard than in reading and mathematics. Pupils achieve well because they are well taught and feel secure.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is satisfactory, but there are shortcomings in some aspects. Across the school, there are too few opportunities for pupils to undertake extended writing, or to use their writing skills in other subjects. Furthermore, there are insufficient links made between subjects, and this leads to missed opportunities for pupils to apply their developing skills in literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT). Curriculum enrichment through themed weeks, visits and the range of extra-curricular activities is very good.

The headteacher provides good leadership, and is well supported by the management team, including the deputy headteacher. This has led to the school's open approach and inclusive atmosphere, of which parents are rightly very appreciative. The partnerships with others, including the local church, the village junior school and external agencies are good. Good improvements have been made to standards in reading and mathematics, and the quality of subject leadership has improved. This attests to the school's good capacity to make further improvements. Governors provide good support and challenge.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children quickly settle in the caring, stimulating environment. The team of adults co-operate well to provide activities that successfully develop children's skills and knowledge. Children make good progress in all areas of learning. The current year group already meets national expectations, and is well placed to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation

Stage. Children's personal and social skills are particularly well developed. They choose their own activities, and work together sociably. Children develop a good knowledge of numbers and measuring. They enjoy sessions where they listen and contribute their ideas. Many are developing early writing skills, and some can already write short sentences. Despite this, children are not given sufficiently frequent opportunities to write, in order to improve their rates of progress. The outdoor area is very well used; children excitedly plant 'grass heads' and discuss what they will look like when the seeds grow. Children's physical development is good. They dress themselves successfully and enjoy moving to music. The adults evaluate children's progress well, and use this information to plan effectively, resulting in good achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in writing through better opportunities to write at length.
- Improve opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge of and skills in literacy, and ICT in other areas of the curriculum.
- Provide more opportunities, particularly in Key Stage 1, for pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning and to make more positive contributions to the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average because achievement is good. Test results at Key Stage 1 in 2007 represented an improvement. Boys had slightly higher scores than girls in mathematics, but girls performed a little better than boys in reading, and much better in writing. The school is addressing this issue by providing material which is more engaging for boys, such as choosing the topic of 'pirates' for Book Week. Girls' and boys' results were both higher than their relative national performance. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make the same good progress as others, because of the good levels of additional support which they receive, as several parents gratefully acknowledge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes contribute well to their learning. They know how to live healthy lives because the school promotes this well through regular lessons in physical education, extra-curricular activities and healthy lunch provision. Pupils feel safe at school. If ever difficulties arise, they are confident to talk to a trusted adult. School Council members speak with pride about their school, but their impact to date in contributing to school improvement has been limited. In classrooms, too, pupils have restricted opportunities to use the good quality of independence developed in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 2, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education with particularly well developed social skills, in addition to their good academic achievement. Levels of attendance are average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers create a good rapport with their pupils, leading to a very positive atmosphere for learning. Their use of praise to encourage pupils is good. Teachers communicate lesson objectives and success criteria consistently well. Other aspects of planning, such as setting tasks that are

well matched to pupils' prior attainment, or providing good challenge, are not yet consistent. A positive example of good practice was seen when one class, who were considering different versions of Jack and the Beanstalk, were set different tasks. These were appropriately challenging for pupils at very different stages of learning to write. In a mathematics lesson, good challenge was evident because the work required pupils to find their own ways of solving arithmetical problems. Teachers have effective techniques of asking questions, which provide them with good feedback on pupils' understanding. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties or with autism are given good support by teaching assistants, which enables them to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has correctly identified the need for curriculum review. At present, there are missed opportunities to create better links between subjects and for pupils to use their writing skills to record their understanding more extensively. The restricted access to computers in classrooms requires good organisation by teachers in order to meet the requirements of the ICT curriculum, and to give pupils enough 'hands-on' time to develop the various ICT skills. The highly successful themed weeks, such as Arts and Music Weeks, motivate pupils well, and are much appreciated by parents. The extended curriculum is strong, and pupils talk with enthusiasm about working with artists, visiting Marwell Zoo and the range of clubs and activities that are on offer outside the school day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care and guidance is good because adults prioritise pupils' well-being and manage them sensitively. This provides a good model for pupils. However, there are missed opportunities to give them additional responsibility, although they respond with enthusiasm to using their initiative. The school fully meets statutory requirements for safeguarding children. Senior leaders use assessment data to good effect to evaluate the progress of pupils and to set them challenging targets. Arrangements for supporting pupils with moderate learning difficulties or with autism are good, and these pupils receive well-focused support in the classroom, which ensures that they achieve well. Transition arrangements from pre-school and to the junior school are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has good procedures to check the quality of teaching and learning, and makes good evaluations of the information arising as the basis for improvements. Monitoring activities, undertaken by the headteacher and by subject leaders, have led to improved expectations and have raised the quality of teaching and learning. However, more remains to be done to improve the quality of the curriculum. Curriculum improvements do not feature strongly enough in school development planning. The management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good. The school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and, to this end, has good procedures to track the progress of different groups of pupils, including any who may be vulnerable. The governing body ensures that statutory requirements are fulfilled. Governors

have a good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are confident to offer good challenge for further improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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.

Annex A**Leadership and management**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant School, Reading, RG7 3SY

We would like to thank all of you, and your teachers, for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you at work in your classrooms and talking to you at playtimes and lunchtimes. We think St John's Infant is a good school and a happy place for children. There are lots of things we thought were good about your school. These are the most important ones.

- You enjoy school, and you behave well indoors and outdoors.
- You have very good relationships with the teachers and other adults, who take good care of you, and this helps you to learn well.
- All the adults make sure all the children feel included.
- Your headteacher and the other school leaders know what is good about your school so they know how to make it even better.
- You get good teaching and, as a result, you are making good progress.
- You like visits to places, special weeks (like Music Week), and the school clubs.
- More of you are making good progress and getting better results in the Year 2 tests in reading, writing and numeracy.
- Your mums and dads are pleased with the school.

We have asked the school to help all of you to make even better progress by:

- giving you more opportunities to do longer pieces of writing
- getting you to use your reading, writing and ICT skills more in your other work
- giving you better opportunities in Year 1 and Year 2 to be more responsible for your work, and for doing more for the school.

We wish you every success in the future. We really enjoyed our time in your school.

Chris Grove

Lead Inspector