

Inspection of Mortimer St. John's C.E. Infant School

The Street, Mortimer Common, Reading, Berkshire RG7 3RD

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 December 2024

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils really enjoy attending Mortimer St John's. Positive and caring relationships are central to the school's work. Staff and parents and carers talk fondly of the welcoming family feel.

Pupils settle in well and are keen to learn. They are curious and enthusiastic learners. Pupils are polite, and they move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. From the start, children in Reception learn to follow classroom rules and routines. Pupils feel safe because adults look after them well. Most pupils are motivated and are eager to share their ideas.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. The school's broad, balanced curriculum helps pupils to build secure knowledge across subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Typically, the school makes sure that additional help provided in lessons meets pupils' individual needs.

Community and a sense of belonging are at the heart of this school. The school makes a concerted effort to support pupils and families from disadvantaged backgrounds. Pupils benefit from a range of clubs, including craft, choir and sports. They enjoy visits to places of interest and engaging with visitors to the school, including theatre groups.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve well, including those with SEND. Many pupils learn the curriculum very well. The school's curriculum generally identifies the knowledge that pupils should remember. This is particularly well considered in English and mathematics. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, and typically deliver the curriculum in a clear and precise way. In a few subjects, however, the curriculum needs further refining to clarify the key knowledge and skills that pupils must learn and when. As a result, some pupils do not learn and remember as much as they could in these subjects.

The school prioritises reading. There is a clear drive to ensure that all pupils become fluent readers. Pupils' reading skills are developed further through regular fluency sessions. Pupils are helped to acquire phonics knowledge in a timely manner. Staff regularly check how well pupils are learning phonics. Any pupils in danger of falling behind receive additional support to help them keep up. Occasionally, however, the specific support for pupils falling behind with phonics is not delivered as effectively as the school intends. This hinders how well the weakest readers develop reading fluency.

Children make a strong start in the early years. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and are well trained to deliver the curriculum effectively. They use this knowledge to engage pupils in well-considered learning activities. Children respond positively and enthusiastically to these learning opportunities. Staff often ensure that children meet the clear learning intentions of each activity. Parents comment very positively about the start their children make in the Reception Year.

Across the school, staff identify and support pupils, including those with SEND, well. There is palpable care and patience shown by staff to help meet pupils' additional needs. The school uses a range of external providers to ensure individual pupils receive the exact support they need.

The school has high expectations for behaviour. Routines are established in the Reception Year and consolidated through purposeful practice in all years. Pupils typically show high levels of motivation and work hard to follow the school's rules. Pupils walk calmly around the school. They are keen to demonstrate their good manners, including when they eat together in the hall. Outside play is harmonious. The school keeps a sharp focus on attendance. When attendance starts to fall, the school works with families to improve this.

The school has a comprehensive programme for personal development. This includes giving pupils the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. There are roles for pupils, such as 'eco-warriors', worship leaders and 'shooting stars' who help on the playground. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, personal safety and the fundamental British values. Ensuring that pupils are ready to make the move to the junior school is threaded through all aspects of school life. For example, Year 2 pupils gain valuable experience of the junior school's swimming pool prior to starting lessons in key stage 2.

The governing body provides strong support and challenge. They are knowledgeable about the school, which helps them drive school improvement effectively. Pupils are front and centre of all the decisions that the school makes. Governors and other leaders ensure that staff feel well supported. The school takes staff well-being very seriously.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the approaches used in phonics lessons and the modelling of pure sounds do not support pupils' learning. This means some pupils have gaps in their phonics knowledge, and these are not addressed quickly enough to enable pupils to become fluent readers. The school must ensure that phonics is delivered effectively so that pupils quickly and confidently learn to read.
- In some areas of the curriculum, the school has focused too much on covering a wide breadth of content at the expense of pupils' depth of knowledge. This means that pupils do not develop a greater depth of understanding over time. The school should further refine the curriculum and prioritise the key content that it wants pupils to learn.

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	109978
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10341254
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Craig Hassey
Headteacher	Clare Beswick
Website	www.mortimerschools.org
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Mortimer Federation of St. John's and St. Mary's. The executive headteacher is responsible for both schools.
- This school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school in the Diocese of Oxford. Its last section 48 inspection took place in June 2023.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other leaders within the school. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing board, including the chair, and educational representatives from both the local authority and the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of governing body meetings and behaviour incident logs.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. An inspector also spoke with parents on the first day of the inspection.
- The views of staff were gathered through interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection, as well as the staff survey.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views throughout the inspection, including through the classroom visits, group discussions, as well as at playtime and lunchtime.

Inspection team

Chris Parker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lizzie Jeanes

Ofsted Inspector

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