



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant Voluntary Controlled Infant School

West End Road
Mortimer
Reading
RG7 3SY

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: West Berkshire

Dates of inspection: 21 January 2016

Date of last inspection: 3 February 2011

School's unique reference number: 109978

Headteacher: Nicola Sumner

Inspector's name and number: Ian Lewis 629

School context

St John's is a small school with 170 pupils on roll aged from 4 to 7 years. It serves the village of Mortimer and is situated at the centre, next door to the parish church. The majority of pupils are white British, coming from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The school has a higher than average number of children recognised as having learning difficulties. A strong and beneficial partnership has been established with the parish church's clergy and community. The school works closely with St Mary's junior school in the village.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Mortimer St John's as a Church of England school are outstanding

This is because:

- A strong and vibrant ethos founded on firm Christian values has been established in which the children thrive both academically and socially.
- Inspirational leadership by the head teacher together with strongly dedicated staff and governors has enabled St John's to flourish and develop as a distinctly Anglican school.
- An exceptionally strong and beneficial partnership has been established with the parish church, its clergy and community which enhances its character as an Anglican school.
- Its strong Christian ethos and the excellent example set by all adults within the school produces children who are well behaved, respectful of others and mutually supportive of one another.

Areas to improve

- To increase the children's awareness and understanding of God's presence in the world around them, develop areas in the outside environment for quiet thought and prayer.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

At the heart of the entire life of Mortimer St John's Infant School is an exceptionally strong and vibrant ethos. This is firmly founded on Christian values based on Biblical teaching, particularly that of Jesus Christ. These are both known and lived by the entire school community. Parents speak extremely warmly of this saying how their children talk about the values and take them into their lives outside school. Evidence of the impact of this is clearly seen in the overall behaviour and attitudes of the children. They demonstrate respect for others and for their environment and are extremely supportive of one another. Adults within the school are excellent exemplars evidenced in the love and care they show to all around them. Parents stress that their children are proud of their school community and of their good behaviour. The children are strongly encouraged to look after and care for each other through the school's 'Sunshine Buddy' scheme in which older pupils, elected by their peers, are 'on duty' in the playground, looking out for those who are younger, alone or upset. The children enthusiastically say how much they enjoy doing this. The children thoroughly enjoy being at school. Parents relate how their children are eager to return after holidays saying, 'They really want to be at school and they love their teachers!' They go on to state, 'This is a lovely school, we're sad that our children are only here for three years.' This is reflected in the children's excellent attendance, evidenced in the school's data. Parents are eager to describe how staff help and support their children through any difficult times in their lives. They go on to say how any issues are dealt with quickly, sensitively and positively. 'Our children trust the staff and know there is always someone they can talk to' is a typical comment. The caring ethos creates within the pupils a real desire to learn and achieve, evidenced in classroom observation, discussion with the children and parents and also in the school's data on progress and achievement which shows the children overall to be achieving above national standards. Observation shows that pupils are actively involved in their learning. A variety of stimulating approaches including art, drama and discussion enriches the learning experience and creates enjoyment, this being very evident through observation. Discussion with staff and parents together with observation gives strong evidence of the targeted support given to children with particular needs. Through this all are able to progress to the best of their individual abilities. Through its strong teaching of Christian values, RE also plays a vital part in creating the caring and supportive ethos evident throughout the school. This is further enriched through the school's excellent partnership with the parish church and the close involvement of its clergy. Through good classroom practice in RE together with collective worship and the involvement of the church there is a strong sense of spirituality within the school. There are opportunities throughout the day for prayer and quiet reflection, both used effectively by the children. Discussion with them gives evidence that they are developing an understanding of the nature of prayer, a typical comment being 'When we pray we can say sorry to God and He will forgive us.' The children enjoy using the reflective areas abundant throughout the school buildings. There are, however, insufficient opportunities provided for children to quietly experience the awe and wonder of nature in the outside environment. Through effective RE teaching, collective worship and the partnership with the church the children are developing a good understanding of Christianity as a world faith, commenting that they enjoy learning about the major faiths and understanding that some people have none. They are also developing an understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens both locally and globally. This is achieved through involvement in local events. In particular, the children share harvest gifts around the village and say how much they enjoy visiting the monthly lunch club, both meeting and entertaining elderly villagers. Charities are actively supported when and where appropriate giving the children a global perspective. Parents enthusiastically speak about the 'Just Different' workshops in which the pupils meet people overcoming various disabilities. They go on to describe how this is developing their children's understanding that society is made up of people with different needs and abilities.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship plays an extremely important part in the life of the school. It affirms and further strengthens the Christian values by which all in its community live. Worship is firmly based on Biblical teachings, particularly those of Jesus Christ. It is clearly relevant to all within the school's community whatever their faith, if any, through its strong moral content. Evidence from observation of worship and discussion with stakeholders shows that all are warmly included and thoroughly enjoy taking part. Through a strong focus on prayer and quiet personal reflection all present experience enhanced spirituality which is subsequently reflected in their attitudes to others and their surroundings. Observation of whole school worship evidenced

the enjoyment experienced by all. Everybody takes an active part, the children leading with confidence born of familiarity with this role, the others joining in enthusiastically but reverently both with activities and superb singing. Prayer and reflection are clearly central to collective worship, the children being familiar with the Lord's Prayer and the school prayer. They are also given opportunities to write and use their own prayers, the children's individual ways of praying being both respected and encouraged. Parents say how much they enjoy taking part in worship, particularly when held in the church. Worship is meticulously planned by the teaching staff strongly led by the co-ordinator working closely with the link governor. The children take an active part in planning and say how much they enjoy choosing songs for worship. They are also given good opportunities to plan and lead themselves, particularly in class-based acts of worship. In response to the previous inspection both the quality of collective worship and its impact on the school community are very regularly evaluated by the co-ordinator and foundation governors through eliciting immediate feedback from the children together with formal discussion and written responses. Evaluation is discussed by staff and governors and subsequently informs future planning. This ensures the ongoing improvement of collective worship. Through a concentration on the key aspects of the Church's year, the children are developing a good understanding of the Trinity clearly evidenced in discussion with them, a typical comment being 'Pentecost is the birthday of the Church when we think about the Holy Spirit'. Through the school's close partnership with the parish church, its clergy and its community together with very regular visits to the church for both worship and curriculum purposes, the children are developing their understanding of Anglican practice and tradition. For example, they speak enthusiastically about receiving the mark of the cross on Ash Wednesday. Their understanding is further enhanced by the inclusion of Anglican liturgy in daily worship. In addition, the school welcomes visitors to collective worship from a range of Christian backgrounds together with some from other faiths. This has resulted in a widening of the children's understanding both of faith and worship evidenced in discussion both with them and with parents.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

The school's leaders have created and established a clear vision for its life and its future based on firm Christian values. These are strongly based on Biblical teaching, particularly that of Jesus Christ. The result is a rich and vibrant Christian ethos which shapes the whole life and development of the school. Clear evidence for the impact of this can be seen in the behaviour and attitudes of all in the school's community who demonstrate love and care for others and for their surroundings. The result is an extremely strong framework in which the children are able to flourish both socially and academically, evidenced in the school's records of progress and achievement. The overall effectiveness of the vision and values is regularly monitored and evaluated by the school's leaders who involve the parents and children through discussion and questionnaires. Evaluations are regularly shared with stakeholders through the school's newsletter. Parents are keen to state that they feel involved and are well informed in matters pertaining to the school and their children's education. The evaluation process informs future planning. Church school distinctiveness is a regular item on governors' agendas and is a permanent item in the school's overall development plan. The continuing distinctiveness of this as a church school is strongly addressed. Leadership potential is clearly identified and through effective performance management is nurtured by carefully targeted professional and personal development. The entire recruitment process is driven by the school's Christian values ensuring that all staff both support and actively develop its future as an Anglican school. Effective professional development has resulted in extremely strong leadership of both RE and collective worship. This has led to excellent provision and ongoing development in both areas. Provision in both RE and collective worship meet current national requirements. The very close partnership with the parish church strengthens both communities. This is evidenced in comments by stakeholders and by the attendance of the wider community at the school's church services. Discussion with parents in particular gives evidence that the children are gaining a strong understanding of the school's Anglican character. It further shows that they are developing a realisation of their roles and responsibilities as Christian citizens in the wider world.