

Marlow Church of England Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110433
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356741
Inspection dates	29–30 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Maddern
Headteacher	Elizabeth Toohig
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. The inspectors observed seven teaching staff while visiting 11 lessons or parts of lessons. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, senior leaders, teaching staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, assessment and tracking information, the governing body minutes, arrangements for safeguarding, and pupils' work. Staff questionnaires were also scrutinised, along with 145 completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- It evaluated the progress made by pupils in writing, particularly that of boys, the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- It explored whether girls made the progress of which they are capable in mathematics.
- It looked at the children's skills and abilities when they enter the school and the progress they make throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Marlow Church of England is a smaller-than-average size infant school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below that seen nationally. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school has Healthy School and Green Flag status and has gained the Activemark, Artsmark, School Travel Plan and International Schools awards.

A privately run day nursery and a privately run pre-school, which also provides wrap around care for children attending Marlow Church of England Infant School, operate on site and are subject to separate inspections.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Marlow Church of England Infant is an outstanding school. Parents and carers are rightly very pleased with the high quality of care, guidance and support provided for their children. The views of one parent are typical of many when commenting, 'I am delighted with my child's experience at this school. The school has a nurturing and caring ethos and offers an excellent breadth of subjects and events.' The headteacher, very well supported by the senior staff and governors, drives the school forward exceptionally well. Consequently it has improved in many areas since the previous inspection.

Pupils make good progress and achieve exceptionally well throughout the school so that, by the end of Year 2, their attainment is significantly above average in the key areas of reading, writing and mathematics. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided with an excellent start so that they are very well prepared for entry into Year 1. There is no significant difference in the good rate of progress made by both girls and boys in mathematics. Girls' writing skills have traditionally been better than those of the boys. However, the school is fully aware of this and has strategies in place, such as making sure that writing activities focus very clearly on areas that capture the boys' imagination. Consequently the gap between boys and girls has reduced significantly. The more able pupils make good progress because they are presented with interesting and challenging activities. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make academic progress in line with their peers, including the progress they make in developing their writing skills. The excellent care, guidance and support help those with behavioural and emotional difficulties to make rapid improvement.

Pupils' outstanding behaviour has a positive impact on their achievement and their high levels of attendance and punctuality are testament to their enthusiasm for learning. This enthusiasm is enhanced through a rich and varied curriculum. For example, the creative partnership links enable the pupils to experience rich multicultural experiences such as their participation in the Javanese musical and shadow puppets show which took place during the inspection. Children thoroughly enjoy the many opportunities to take part in physical activities which enable them to gain an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have an excellent rapport with pupils and are particularly good at using interactive whiteboards to stimulate the pupils' interest. Work is marked regularly and systematically and assessment information is used accurately to pitch the work at the correct level. Opportunities are missed in the teaching,

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however, to encourage pupils to become more independent in their learning.

Senior leaders have an excellent awareness of the strengths of the school because of the high quality of self-evaluation procedures. Strategies to improve the quality of boys' writing have been effective and links have been established and developed with schools internationally, providing the pupils with a greater awareness of life beyond their local community. These links have resulted in the International Schools award. A systematic drive to raise and maintain pupils' attainment has been successful. These improvements demonstrate an excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide pupils with more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning by improving the balance between teacher-directed and pupil-initiated activities and by allowing them to move on to more challenging activities sooner.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children typically enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are generally at similar levels to those expected for their age although those of the current cohort are below. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics for both boys and girls. Pupils write for a wide range of purposes. For example, Year 1 pupils wrote good riddles and Year 2 pupils' planning for writing about explorers demonstrated a mature approach. They used a very good range of connectives and 'exciting' words to make their work more interesting. The work on explorers particularly enthused the boys and, consequently, they progressed as well as the girls. The good number of well-skilled teaching assistants provided good support for those pupils who find work difficult, helping them to progress in line with their peers. One-to-one and small group activities improve the confidence of these pupils considerably, enabling them to enjoy learning and take a full part in school life. Pupils say bullying is not an issue for them and that they feel exceptionally safe.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons and their achievement is outstanding. Pupils are confident and concentrate very well. For example, in a Year 1 art lesson they really persevered to produce their own pictures having been shown some painted by Rolf Harris in the style of Monet. As a result, they produced some high quality paintings. Pupils get on very well with one another sharing and taking turns very sensibly. They take on responsibility, for example as school and eco councillors, encouraging recycling and reducing energy consumption. The receipt of the Healthy Schools status and the Activemark award is testimony to the pupils' excellent understanding of the need to eat healthily and a very large number regularly participate in the

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excellent range of sporting and physical activities on offer. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is the result of extremely well-planned activities. Strong and developing links with a school in Uganda, and reciprocal visits by staff, help to provide pupils with a strong understanding of other cultures. Pupils' excellent social skills, their outstanding behaviour, high attendance and outstanding attainment prepare them extremely well for the next stage of education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The excellent relationships between staff and pupils help to create a very happy learning environment. Teachers know the pupils well and they prepare work that is well matched to each pupil's ability and maturity. They mark their work carefully and systematically and pupils understand their targets and what they need to do to improve their work. Teaching assistants are used well, for example to teach letter sounds to small groups of pupils and to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Occasionally, teachers give the pupils too much information and this limits the opportunities for them to find things out for themselves and to be more responsible for their own learning.

The well-organised curriculum provides an excellent range of activities for pupils. There is a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. The introduction of regular mathematical investigation mornings is developing both girls' and boys'

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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confidence in solving problems in practical situations. Opportunities to work with local artists provide the pupils with good skills. Specialist teaching of music helps pupils to sing tunefully and enthusiastically, with many opportunities for them to perform at the local church and elsewhere in the community. Visiting staff from the linked school in Uganda provided the pupils with an excellent opportunity to learn new dances and songs and to appreciate the diversity of other cultures. An excellent range of visits, such as the visit to Warwick Castle and Hughenden Manor for a Victorian Christmas, provides the pupils with many memorable experiences. Most pupils taken part in at least one of the many clubs on offer and these really enhance their learning experiences. Transition arrangements both in and out of the school are excellent. Pupils are very well known to the staff, provided with excellent support and very well looked after. As a consequence of extremely high quality care, guidance and support, pupils’ personal development is outstanding. Very effective intervention strategies ensure that those pupils at risk of underachieving are identified early and provided with effective support. Pupils’ personal and emotional development is monitored very closely. Excellent links with the local pupil referral unit support the school in identifying and managing any inappropriate behaviour.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has continued to improve since the previous inspection, the result of well-focused and determined leadership by the headteacher. Morale at the school is very high and all staff are very supportive in helping the school to move forward. While there is a determination to improve or maintain the pupils’ high attainment, there is also a determination to ensure pupils enjoy learning and to expand the range of activities. The leadership has been successful in obtaining grants to promote creative learning partnerships. Pupils were involved in interviewing and selecting the partnership currently in school, making it more relevant and meaningful to them. Monitoring of teaching and learning is systematic and rigorous and performance management of staff is fully implemented. The headteacher has an accurate picture of the strengths of teaching and where improvements can be made and professional development of staff is organised effectively, so improving their skills. The monitoring and tracking of pupils’ progress are accurate and have been used to improve progress in the main curriculum areas. Personalised information is used effectively to ensure all pupils have excellent equality of opportunity and that there is no discrimination. This is also reflected in the significant closing of gaps between boys’ and girls’ progress in writing.

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The governing body knows the school’s strengths and weaknesses well and members are regular visitors. It is supportive but challenging and displays an excellent strategic vision, looking carefully at how the funding can be used to best effect through sharing of resources and expertise with other partners. Planning and evaluation for community cohesion are effective. The school has rightly identified the need to further develop pupils’ awareness and experiences of people from different cultural backgrounds in this country. Links with two schools have been established and the school is doing all it can to further these links. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and meet requirements. Minor issues were being dealt with by the governors. There are excellent partnerships with support agencies and secure child protection procedures. The excellent links with parents and carers enable them to become partners in their children’s learning and their overwhelmingly positive response to the parent questionnaire give a clear indication of their confidence in the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents and carers are delighted with the start their children get in the Reception classes. Children settle quickly, including those who are not yet attending full-time, and they thoroughly enjoy learning. They are eager to come to school and concentrate well. They really enjoy the phonic sessions, showing enthusiasm for learning the sounds and letters. Children make at least good and often outstanding progress so that their attainment is above average on entry to Year 1. Their enthusiasm for learning contributes significantly to their progress. For example in a session looking at airports, the children made excellent progress in their increased vocabulary.

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The Early Years Foundation Stage leaders provide outstanding leadership; they work together very effectively and have established excellent procedures to assess and record the children’s progress. Their knowledge of the children through very strong links with pre-school and with parents and carers has enabled them to adapt the curriculum to meet the differing social and academic needs of the children. The impact of this has been to move from two classes to three, enabling the staff to work more effectively with the smaller classes. The outstanding facilities provide the children with a wide range of opportunities to undertake role play, use computers and undertake wet play activities. The extensive grounds provide excellent opportunities for children to take part in physical play. Teaching is consistently good and children enjoy the activities as a result. Teaching assistants have a good understanding of the children’s needs and make a good contribution to children’s learning. Teachers provide a good range of activities for the children. However, there is occasionally too much teacher direction and on these occasions too few opportunities for them to develop their independence skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire was well above that seen nationally. Almost all expressed their considerable satisfaction with all aspects of the school’s provision and comments written on the questionnaires and discussions with individual parents confirmed this. There were no areas of significant concern raised by the parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Marlow Church of England Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 145 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 180 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	109	75	33	23	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	114	79	29	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	78	54	61	42	5	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	89	61	52	36	2	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	102	70	42	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	86	59	55	38	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	90	62	52	36	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	95	66	46	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	85	59	56	39	2	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	75	52	60	41	3	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	72	50	67	46	2	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	107	74	36	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	114	79	30	21	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



31 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marlow Church of England Infant School, Marlow SL7 3AZ

Thank you very much for welcoming us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school and what we have asked the school to do to become even better.

- Your parents and carers are rightly very happy with the school because it is outstanding.
- You say how much you really enjoy school and we saw that in your enthusiasm, your excellent behaviour and in how regularly you attend school.
- You have an excellent understanding of what you need to do to keep yourselves healthy and fit and we are pleased you take part in the many sports and games activities.
- The curriculum gives you lots of interesting things to do with an excellent range of clubs, activities, visits and visitors that makes your work more interesting. We really enjoyed listening to Year 1 pupils playing the gamelans and percussion instruments and watching the shadow puppet theatre as part of their learning about Java.
- The headteacher, teachers and staff look after you exceptionally well. They give those of you who find learning difficult or who have other difficulties considerable help and support.
- Those in charge of the school are working hard to make it even better.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher and staff to do the following.

- Give all of you more opportunities to find things out for yourselves.

You can all help by trying hard to work things out for yourselves and by telling the teachers if you sometimes find the work a little easy.

Yours sincerely

Paul Edwards
Lead inspector

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