

Mount Pleasant Primary School

Newton Lane, Darlington, County Durham, DL3 9HE

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children have a good introduction to learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The strong focus on developing speaking and listening skills and their personal and social development ensures that they are well prepared for future learning.
- Achievement is good overall because most pupils make at least good and sometimes outstanding progress. From a range of different starting points most pupils reach the expected standards by the time they leave Year 6.
- Good teaching provides opportunities for pupils to make at least good progress overall. Where teaching is outstanding, pupils' progress is accelerated.
- Excellent provision in the Resource Provision Unit ensures that pupils make the best progress and are well placed to achieve well when they move on to their next stage in education.
- Relationships between pupils, parents and with staff are highly successful. There is a strong commitment to support parents to ensure that their children are in school and ready to learn.
- Pupils are very happy and say that they enjoy school. They have particularly good opportunities through their individual roles and responsibilities to share ideas, and put these into practice to improve the school.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. There is a shared understanding of respecting oneself and others. This is seen in the very positive manner in which pupils conduct themselves in lessons and around the school.
- Excellent leadership from the headteacher, leadership team and governing body have secured rapid improvements in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The school enables pupils to move on confidently to their next stage of learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching. For some pupils, work is not challenging enough at their individual levels.
- Marking across all subjects is inconsistent and does not always help pupils to improve their work.
- Pupils' attainment in reading and writing are less consistent than in mathematics because there are too few challenging opportunities for pupils to use and practise their reading and writing skills across other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or parts of lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior and middle leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short visits to lessons and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, pupils, members of the governing body, staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 13 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and to the school's own parental survey information.
- Inspectors took account of 39 staff questionnaires.
- They observed the school's work and took into account the work in pupils' books, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and information relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils during morning playtime and lunchtime, and attended an assembly.

Inspection team

Kate Pringle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Redhead

Additional Inspector

Dominic Brown

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those children in local authority care or from service families, is well above average.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British background.
- The school maintains a local authority funded Resource Provision Unit for 14 pupils with social and communication difficulties, including Autism, from across the authority. They are taught within the unit and as part of mainstream classes where appropriate. From September 2013, the number of pupils in the unit is increasing to 20.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school runs a successful breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, especially in reading and writing, by:
 - ensuring that pupils' work is always well matched to their individual abilities and focuses on what pupils need to learn in order to progress further
 - increasing the challenge for pupils when using their skills in reading and writing across other subjects
 - using marking consistently well across all subjects in order to reflect pupils' success and to point out what they need to learn next in order to make better progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below those expected for their age, particularly in speaking and listening and their personal and social development. They make good progress because staff understand their needs and help parents to be involved in their children's learning.
- Good progress continues in Key Stage 1 and accelerates in Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average. Throughout the school, pupils' progress and attainment are less consistent in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- All groups, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress. The school is very aware of the needs of these pupils and makes sure that the necessary support is put in place to enable them to succeed in their learning.
- The Resource Unit pupils make exceptional progress. They are fully included in the school and staff are unceasing in their efforts to enable these pupils to manage their behaviour well. Pupils are very involved in learning. They are encouraged to become independent learners and progress rapidly from their wide and individual starting points.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding make outstanding progress. Those who are known to be eligible for free school meals attain well, outperforming other pupils in the school and similar pupils nationally because of the quality of the support they receive.
- The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is successful, showing increasing improvement in younger pupils' reading skills. Pupils in the current Year 1 now achieve in line with other Year 1 pupils nationally.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics are consistently good across the school and achievement is higher than that in English.
- Responses to the questionnaire and the school's own survey indicate that parents feel their children are happy in school and make good progress. All pupils spoken with indicated that they enjoyed the work and challenge posed by teachers and teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching over time is consistently good with some that is outstanding. Teachers make good use of rigorous tracking to set challenging targets and to check on pupils' progress. In outstanding lessons, teachers plan creative and stimulating activities and pupils are encouraged to use their newly learnt skills independently.
- Pupils are eager to learn and have excellent relationships with teachers and staff. They are proud of their work and want to share their successes. Even when the going gets tough, when work gets difficult, pupils continue to try hard.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle well because of the excellent focus on their welfare and needs. One little girl on her introduction to nursery 'quivered' with excitement as she took in all of the possibilities in the welcoming setting. Children are encouraged to be independent learners and happily make choices. Careful questioning encourages children to think for themselves and staff work unceasingly to improve children's speaking and listening skills.
- Most successful learning takes place when pupils are encouraged to be independent and find out answers for themselves through tasks well matched to their abilities. They are encouraged to share ideas and teachers' questioning guide learning very well as pupils are challenged to consider different ways of looking at the task.
- When lessons are less challenging, activities are not sufficiently well linked to what individual pupils can do well and what they need to do to improve. There are too few opportunities for pupils to return to their work, consider teachers' comments and improve their work. Marking and

teachers' oral comments to pupils about meeting their targets and what they need to do to improve are at times not clear enough, which impacts upon how quickly pupils progress.

- Lively experiences within the curriculum provide pupils with increasing opportunities to be creative, independent learners. When learning reflects 'real life' situations, this enables pupils to understand when and how to apply their skills in reading and writing. However, these good quality opportunities for pupils to be challenged to apply these skills across a range of subjects are limited. Although teachers provide interesting experiences, some expectations of the quality of work in topic books are too low and the work is less well marked.
- Within the Resource Unit, the excellent understanding of the individual needs of pupils means that they progress very well, with many able to take part in learning in their mainstream year group. Staff teach clear strategies for pupils to use when they are feeling unsure and need to be left alone. This means that pupils are able to recognise their emotions and deal with them so successfully that the minimum of learning time is lost. All pupils can then make best use of learning opportunities.
- Pupils have specific and easy to understand targets and they have an improving knowledge of what they need to do next to improve. They successfully use their knowledge to assess their own work and that of their friends.
- Highly trained teaching assistants contribute very well to pupils' learning. They work closely with teachers and understand pupils' needs. They use their skills to probe pupils' understanding and recognise when additional support is needed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Relationships across the school are very strong. Pupils interact well with each other and staff. They behave exceptionally well both in lessons and around the school. They are extremely polite, well-mannered, friendly and very keen to share their successes.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They talk about the vast improvements in behaviour and are very sure that poor behaviour or bullying is extremely rare. They recognise the different forms bullying can take, including social network sites and say that any negative behaviour is dealt with rapidly and successfully by staff who apply the strict code of discipline which pupils understand very well. School surveys and Parent View fully support pupils' views.
- Pupils are awarded for their efforts at every level. All staff hand out 'smileys' to any pupil who they recognise as showing good work or good behaviour. The school council determines who receives the weekly behaviour award and weekly presentation assemblies celebrate the achievements of pupils in each class.
- The needs of those pupils who come from circumstances where they may be potentially vulnerable are very well supported. The home liaison team works extremely well developing support networks with families to ensure pupils are in school. A successful breakfast club provides pupils with a good start to their day. Attendance has risen to above average and the proportion of exclusions from school is negligible.
- Pupils recognise that there is always someone in school to turn to when they have concerns and this enables them to make the most of their learning opportunities. This is very apparent in the Resource Unit where pupils are taught strategies to enable them to indicate their emotions to others and take themselves out of situations which might cause distress. Learning is not interrupted and this responsibility for their actions means they are well placed for inclusion in mainstream classes.
- Pupils' social and personal development is central to the school ethos of 'Learn for Life'. Pupils delight in taking on different responsibilities through which they have a strong voice influencing what happens in their school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's successful determination to drive the school forward is shown in the many improvements that the school has made. Supported by a strong leadership team and an active governing body, there is a shared commitment to make the school outstanding. Leaders' view of the school's performance is reflective, honest and challenging.
- A rigorous programme to check on teaching quality and to provide well-focused professional development has ensured considerably better achievement for all pupils, improved attendance, exceptional behaviour and rising achievement. This is a strongly improving school.
- Senior leaders regularly check the progress of pupils in lessons and in their books. Information identifies key areas to develop and challenging targets are set for staff. Promotion and salary awards are clearly linked to teaching performance and how well staff carry out their roles and responsibilities.
- Disabled pupils or those with special educational needs progress as well as others, including the pupils in the Resource Unit. Pupil premium funding provides well-focused support, resources and additional learning experiences. As a result, these pupils achieve exceptionally well outperforming other pupils.
- The good achievement of all pupils from their individual starting points indicates the school's highly effective promotion of equality of opportunity and the tackling of any discrimination.
- The school's curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to extend their experiences of the world around them. Well-conceived topics are shared with parents so that they can contribute to their children's learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the curriculum and opportunities to reflect upon 'Learn for Life' enable pupils to understand their rights and those of others. An additional range of activities are provided to further enhance pupils' skills at lunchtime and after school.
- The school enjoys close and productive links with the local authority, which supports this school well, including shared lesson observations.
- The school's arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils meet statutory requirements and demonstrate good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are passionate about their school. They have worked highly successfully with the headteacher and other leaders and staff to ensure that the school provides very well for pupils. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths but are not complacent and frequently challenge the school to improve further. Through regular 'learning walks', discussions with staff and the rigorous analysis of performance data, they are very knowledgeable about what is happening in school and the impact of actions to improve outcomes for pupils and the quality of teaching. Finances, including funding of performance related pay and the allocation of the pupil premium funding, are well directed and monitored for their impact on improving standards.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114166
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	400087

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Henderson
Headteacher	Carol Coleman
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2011
Telephone number	01325 244950
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