

# Mount Pleasant Lane Junior Mixed and Infant School and Nursery

Mount Pleasant Lane, Bricket Wood, St Albans, AL2 3XA

**Inspection dates** 11–12 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- School leaders, including governors, know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and use this knowledge to make improvements. They have been successful in improving teaching and achievement in all year groups.
- Pupils are taught phonics (the sounds letters make) very well.
- Reading has a high profile throughout the school with the result that pupils read well from a variety of texts.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers make learning enjoyable.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. They say they feel safe. Behaviour around the building, entering and leaving the hall and at break times is typically good.
- Children in the early years achieve well because of highly effective adult support.
- The curriculum is good with a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' understanding of the values that prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good.
- Governors are enthusiastic and committed to school improvement. They understand pupils' performance and the quality of teaching through the effective use of questioning to challenge senior leaders.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- New middle leaders have had insufficient time in their roles to help teachers further improve their practice.
- Not all teachers reshape tasks to help pupils to deepen their understanding and accelerate their progress in lessons.
- In a few classes, the marking of pupils' work does not show them, clearly enough, how to improve.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 18 classes including eight jointly with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in books and on display around the school. They listened to pupils read from Years 2 and 6 and talked to them about reading.
- Inspectors talked to pupils informally in the playground and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's view of its own performance and the school improvement plan. They also looked at documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke to teachers and senior leaders, three governors and held a telephone conversation with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of 128 replies to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, and 40 staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Lacey-Hastings

Additional Inspector

Barbara Chevis

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school with a nursery.
- The large majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked-after children.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- The yearly intake of pupils is 45. Children are divided into groups of 15 and in alternate years they are taught in a mixed-age class.
- The Nursery is part-time and offers places for 30 children. Children in the Reception class attend full-time.
- The school meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- There have been some changes in staffing since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2014. The mathematics and literacy subject leaders took up their roles in the autumn term 2014.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers take account of pupils' learning in lessons to reshape tasks so that they deepen their understanding and accelerate their progress.
- Ensure all teachers use marking to show pupils how to improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of the newer middle leaders so that they use pupils' performance data, work in books and observations to help teachers to improve their practice.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher leads the school with a clear vision and drive to improve standards and progress. He is ably assisted by the newly appointed deputy and team of dedicated staff. They create an atmosphere in the school where pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are able to flourish. They have ensured behaviour is consistently good and that teaching and achievement continue to improve.
- The early years staff team is well led and managed with the result that children settle quickly and make good progress during their first years in school.
- Rigorous and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, including scrutiny of pupils' books, by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, has secured improvement. This is having a positive effect throughout the school and especially in Key Stage 2.
- The right priorities to improve the school are identified in a plan which is clearly linked to pupils' achievement. This plan is reviewed regularly to ensure the school is moving forward and able to meet the needs of all the pupils.
- Middle leaders are all committed to their roles. They understand the important strengths and areas for improvement in the school. However, newer subject leaders have not yet had time to support all teachers to continue to improve their practice through observing lessons, looking at books and analysing performance data.
- Effective, regular checks on pupils' progress quickly identify pupils who are finding it difficult to keep up with the rest of the class and additional help is given. The most able pupils are identified and their progress carefully checked to ensure they are on course to reach the standards of which they are capable. The school is following the Hertfordshire programme for the assessment of pupils. It has been fully implemented in Year 1 and senior leaders are modifying it to apply to all other year groups.
- Good use is made of pupil premium funding for one-to-one teaching and small-group work. The deputy headteacher has particular responsibility for monitoring these pupils who now make faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics. She works with teachers and liaises with parents and provides workshops to assist parents to help their children at home.
- The curriculum is planned to engage and interest the pupils. For example, a class assembly showed pupils' recent studies of Tutankhamen and the process of mummification was acted out. This sparked a great deal of interest from the audience, which included many parents. Another assembly helped pupils to understand the Chinese New Year celebrations. This breadth of topics meets the needs and interests of pupils and teaches the values that prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is used well. Some is used to provide sports coaches. It has also been used to develop a dance curriculum which has had a positive impact upon pupils' skills. An all-weather surface and additional equipment have been purchased to enhance opportunities to take part in sporting activities. A variety of clubs are provided at lunchtimes and pupils are now more active during break times. Speed stacking has been introduced as a new area for the less athletic pupils. This proved to be a great success for the school at the district sports event.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet all current requirements and are effective. Records are well maintained. All teaching, non-teaching staff and governors attend regular safeguarding training. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Pupils learn to respect each other and adults as part of their daily learning and playing. School leaders ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all pupils through the good use of additional funding and careful monitoring of individual achievement.
- The school commissions effective support from the local authority and receives three standard visits a year. Teaching is monitored and assistance given to governors to set targets for the headteacher's

performance. Support has also been given to improve writing across the school. This has had a positive effect.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective. Governors are enthusiastic and understand the current position for standards and achievement and areas for school improvement. Governors consider the end of year test results because they are anxious to see the school improve quickly. Governors have reviewed the skills which already exist within the governing body and are using this knowledge as they start to look at the reconstitution of the governing body ready for the next academic year.
- Governors visit the school regularly and gain first-hand understanding of pupils' achievement. They talk with pupils and look at books, and listen to children read. In this way they ensure that the pupil premium and the sports premium are spent well and understand the impact these funds are having.
- Governors manage the performance of the headteacher very effectively. They use the school's improvement partner to help them to set objectives which they review twice during the year. They ensure the school's systems for the performance and management of staff are robust and that the performance of teachers and non-teaching staff is reflected in decisions related to pay and progression. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Typically pupils listen carefully and settle to their learning quickly, especially when teaching is lively with activities they become involved in.
- Relationships are good. Behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils move quietly from the playground to their classes and to and from the assembly hall. They play together at playtimes and show consideration towards each other and adults by opening doors and waiting while adults, or pupils, enter or leave.
- In lessons, pupils work with each other in pairs or groups and share equipment well. They say they are happy at school and like their teachers. Attendance is good. Work is neatly presented and books looked after well. They are proud of their school.
- Play leaders supervise at lunchtime and encourage pupils to play games using a variety of apparatus, which the school has recently purchased.
- Very occasionally, when tasks set for pupils are not as interesting as usual, a few pupils lose concentration.

#### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the internet and when using other technology. They understand about road safety and how to keep safe in a range of situations.
- Attendance is above average due to successful actions taken by staff. Absences are immediately followed up, on the first day, by a telephone call to parents or carers. The school works closely with the local authority attendance improvement officer for persistent absentees and has recently changed its policy to include the use of fines for non attendance.
- Parents and staff feel that the school keeps the pupils safe and looks after them well. Pupils say there is little bullying and that they know that racist or homophobic name-calling is wrong. They say if there are any problems they are sorted out fully and to their satisfaction by staff.

## The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils are well taught. Pupils' work in their books shows that teaching over time has been good, with pupils making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in both Key Stages 1 and 2. This is especially the case in reading because phonics is very well taught, from the early years onwards, and younger pupils use this knowledge to help them to tackle unfamiliar words.
- Most lessons maintain pupils' interest and successfully promote positive attitudes to learning. Teachers plan and provide lessons that help pupils learn quickly in a range of subjects. They plan work with high expectations for all pupils including the most able and disadvantaged pupils. Teachers move around groups of pupils well, constantly reminding them of ways to improve.
- The most-able pupils attend a booster club before school which is open to all Year 6 pupils as well as booster groups during the school day. This has helped to raise the number of pupils attaining the highest levels in recent tests and assessments.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and highly effective in giving help and assistance when needed. They have attended a course designed by the headteacher and Hertfordshire University to help them understand how to help pupils with their learning. They know when to stand back and allow pupils to try harder themselves. Teachers and teaching assistants are committed to ensuring the pupils make good progress and are keen to see them all succeed.
- Teachers do not always reshape tasks to ensure that pupils deepen their understanding and move on in their learning. Sometimes questioning by adults does not give pupils the opportunity to develop a topic further by acquiring new knowledge or developing their thinking.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. Teachers' comments are followed through but do not always make it clear enough to pupils what they need to do improve their work. In a few classes, marking is simply correcting mistakes in spelling and punctuation.

## The achievement of pupils

is good

- Over time, standards in Key Stage 1 have been above average. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1, building on the good start they make in the early years. Until recently, progress has not been as rapid in Key Stage 2. Changes in teaching staff have brought marked improvements across Key Stage 2 and progress is now much faster. The work in pupils' books shows that in Key Stage 2 pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils are making good progress throughout the school. The school's current data and inspection evidence show that the present Year 6 pupils have made good progress throughout their time in Key Stage 2. Following recent tests and assessments, data collected by the teachers shows these pupils are already far ahead of the 2014 end-of-year test results in reading, writing and mathematics. They are on course to meet challenging targets with many pupils exceeding them.
- Reading has been a high priority in both key stages. Most pupils enjoy reading and read with the confidence and accuracy expected for their age. Younger pupils make good use of their knowledge of phonics to read unfamiliar words. They show their excitement about books and spontaneously ask each other, and inspectors, which book they are currently reading.
- In Year 6 in 2014, there were too few disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to comment on pupils' progress without identifying individuals. Currently, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, in Year 6, benefit from good support provided by well-trained teaching assistants and teachers and regular, robust monitoring by senior leaders. Across the school these pupils are making good progress.
- There were too few disadvantaged pupils, in Year 6 in 2014, to compare their attainment with other

pupils. In Key Stage 1 the gap has now closed between these pupils and the others. In Key Stage 2 the gap is closing rapidly because these pupils are making good progress.

- The most able pupils, in Year 6 last year, made the progress expected of them in reading and writing, but too few made more than this to reach the highest level 6. In mathematics, a higher proportion of the most able pupils reached level 6 than was the case nationally. Current data show a considerable number of these pupils making more than expected progress in reading and writing. The most able pupils across the school are making good progress, which is carefully monitored by senior staff.

### The early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of the early years provision in the Nursery and the Reception classes are good. Adults are good role models and introduce routines which help children to settle quickly in a safe and secure environment. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and activities chosen by the children themselves, giving them the opportunity to follow their own interests.
- The children start Nursery with skills that are typical for their age. They are particularly accomplished in communication and calculations but weaker in personal, social and emotional development. Two thirds of the children from the Nursery transfer to the Reception classes where they continue to make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1 most children from all ability groups have made good progress in most areas of learning and especially in personal, social and emotional development and number. A significant number of the most able children make good progress in all seven areas of learning. This prepares children well for Year 1.
- Adults are continually observing and assessing children and they use the information they collect to plan activities that build on what children know and are able to do. They are quick to plan activities that give children the practice to develop the skills they need to acquire before they can move on. Teaching is consistently good. Resources are used well including computers, for example, to develop number skills and hand-eye coordination.
- Behaviour is good both inside and outside the classroom. Children learn to listen well and to share apparatus and have the advantage of a large space outside to play and learn. They enjoy good relationships with their peers and all adults. They are thoughtful and considerate.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117347
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	456046

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	343
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Linda Crocker
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Dibdin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23–24 February 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 672729
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