

Mount Pleasant Junior School

Mount Pleasant Road, Southampton, Hampshire SO14 0WZ

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school has undergone a period of turbulence in recent years that has held back the progress that pupils make. The current leadership structure is still temporary and has been overly reliant on external support to achieve the improvements that have been made.
- Until recently, governors have not provided sufficient support or challenge to senior leaders. They have relied too heavily on what the headteacher has told them.
- Assessment information is not always reliable because it has not been checked carefully. As a result, senior leaders and governors do not have a detailed understanding of the progress that different groups of pupils are making. This limits leaders' ability to identify and tackle weaknesses quickly.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. Some good teaching enables pupils to make strong progress, but this is not mirrored across the school. Teaching does not support boys, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who need to catch up, to make consistently good progress.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Work does not always challenge pupils, especially the most able.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to consolidate and extend their mathematical skills by tackling problems or engaging in mathematical reasoning.
- Leaders and governors do not make effective use of the additional pupil premium funding. While some disadvantaged pupils achieve well, others make slower progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have steadied the ship in the last year. They have focused clearly on improving teaching and raising standards. This is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders at all levels have a broadly accurate view of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to accelerate improvements.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are cared for well and kept safe. Parents appreciate this.
- Pupils have a mature, well-developed understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils are kind, thoughtful and tolerant, which leads to a harmonious school community. The school is a calm and orderly place.
- Leaders have worked effectively to engage with families, including finding ways of overcoming language barriers that many parents face.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management in order to raise standards by ensuring that:
 - sustainable senior leadership drives urgent improvement effectively
 - governors are well informed about the progress of the different groups of pupils, and they hold leaders to account rigorously for pupils' achievement
 - leaders track pupils' progress accurately and reliably and use this information, and wider school performance information, to identify promptly, and address, any dips in pupils' progress
 - leaders and governors evaluate the use of the pupil premium funding effectively, to ensure that this leads to better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make good progress, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, so that pupils are provided with work that challenges and supports their learning effectively, particularly the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils, boys, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need to catch up
 - improving all teaching to be good or better throughout the school
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of the leadership may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has experienced unsettled times since the last inspection. There has been considerable staff turnover, including at senior leadership level. For example, several people have acted as temporary headteacher. Throughout this period, standards and the rate of pupils' progress have dipped sharply. As a result of instability, standards have declined and improvement in teaching has been too slow. Leaders and governors are dependent on the support and guidance of external advisers to provide a clear strategy for improvement.
- Senior leaders and governors have not evaluated the use of pupil premium funding nor looked in detail for ways of improving its effectiveness. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are not catching up quickly and they achieve less well than others in almost all year groups.
- Leaders, including governors, do not check that the additional funding for special educational needs has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Consequently, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is too slow.
- Senior leaders have a broadly accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, leaders do not have a sufficiently clear focus on evaluating the progress of different groups of pupils.
- The management of teachers' performance is beginning to be used well to drive forward improvements needed in the school. Leaders are providing teachers at various stages of their career with carefully chosen training opportunities. For example, the deputy headteacher provides effective support to help teachers to improve and is a good mentor for the school's newly qualified teachers. This is helping teachers to develop their skills, and rectify weaknesses that have been identified.
- Middle leaders are beginning to lead their subjects effectively. They are focusing more on pupils' progress and have a broadly accurate view of what needs to be done to improve achievement in their subject. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work in all subjects.
- Although leadership at all levels is starting to improve and demonstrate the capacity for further improvement, it is still too soon to show significant impact. However, there are some encouraging emerging signs in improvements in the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Most parents are positive about the school's work. One parent said, 'As a parent, I have received a lot of help from teachers and guidance in how to help my child too.' A few parents have concerns about the rate of school improvement historically and the turnover in teachers. One parent said that she felt that teachers did not know her child well as so many teachers have come and gone.
- The curriculum provides pupils in this ethnically diverse community with many opportunities to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural education. In particular, pupils acquire a firm grasp of equalities and fundamental British values. One pupil told inspectors, 'British values are made so that the world is fair for everyone equally.'

- Pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is well catered for. They enjoy learning about a range of faiths and cultures and speak respectfully about people with different beliefs to their own. Pupils' understanding of the importance of tolerance and their respect for diversity is mature and extremely well developed.
- Pupils benefit from the good range of sports and games on offer, both in lessons and outside of the school timetable. The physical education and sports premium funding has been used well to ensure that teachers improve their own skills by working alongside experienced sports coaches. There is a varied range of sports on offer, including football, cricket, tag rugby and table tennis. Growing numbers of pupils now represent the school in sports competitions.
- The headteacher has approached his role with vigour and aspiration. He exudes enthusiasm and is committed to helping the school improve rapidly. Together with other leaders, the headteacher is tackling weaknesses in the school effectively. Leaders demonstrate a determined approach to improving teaching. There is a more settled staff team, most of whom are positive about the direction in which the school is now starting to travel. However, due to temporary leadership arrangements, uncertainty prevails.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has suffered ongoing instability since the previous inspection. Until recently, this has left governors unable to offer leaders the support, challenge and steady hand that is required. Governors have spent much time on trying to recruit a suitable permanent headteacher and making decisions about the future direction of the school. This has been at the expense of keeping abreast of the wider life of the school and pupils' progress.
- Until very recently, governors have taken information provided by leaders without question and have not asked searching questions to check its accuracy. Some information provided for the governing body has painted an overly positive picture of school effectiveness. For example, senior leaders' reporting has focused on minor improvements in published achievement information, rather than alerting governors to weaker areas, such as the variable progress of different groups of pupils. At present, the headteacher does not provide a regular report on all aspects of the school's work to governors.
- Governors take seriously their responsibility for keeping pupils safe. The governing body has strengthened recently as new members with experience of successful school leadership and safeguarding have joined. They have a clear understanding of the policies and procedures that need to be in place, and ensure that the right checks are made when new staff are employed. Governors have a particularly strong set of skills to guard against the dangers of radicalisation and female genital mutilation.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils are safe in school. They are taught how to stay safe in a wide range of situations including on the road, in water and on the railway. Visits from the fire brigade and local police officers all deepen their understanding.

- Leaders have created a culture in which the well-being of each pupil is at the heart of the school's work. All adults in the school are regularly trained so that all staff can recognise the signs that a child may be at risk and know how to report any concerns that may arise. The school's work to safeguard vulnerable pupils is prompt, rigorous and effective. It works closely with other agencies to make sure that pupils are kept safe.
- Policies and procedures are fit for purpose and reviewed regularly. The school keeps detailed, accurate and well-maintained records, including those to make sure that only suitable staff, volunteers and governors are allowed to work in the school.
- Leaders provide helpful advice for parents on keeping their children safe online and recently arranged a meeting in school to emphasise this important topic. Pupils have a good understanding of e-safety because it is taught regularly and, where appropriate, built into the curriculum. In a lesson seen by an inspector, pupils were asked to discuss whether it was right for children to have unrestricted time using computers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good. In some year groups teachers use effective strategies to enable pupils to learn well but in others teaching is much less effective, so pupils do not make the steady progress they are capable of.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not high enough. Work does not always stretch or offer sufficient challenge to pupils of all abilities, particularly the most able. Pupils who need to catch up and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not supported consistently well to boost their progress.
- There is widespread inconsistency in the way that teachers use assessment information. Some teachers plan lessons that build securely on previous learning. In other classes, this information is not used well, so some pupils, particularly boys, lose interest because the work teachers provide is too easy or too difficult.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers plan activities to occupy pupils' time rather than having a clear focus on what pupils will learn. In these lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are less positive and they apply themselves less well to their learning.
- The school was late in introducing the 2014 curriculum. As a result, some teachers are still coming to grips with the more challenging standards that pupils are now expected to achieve. At times, teachers' subject knowledge is insecure.
- Work seen in pupils' books is of a variable quality. Sometimes, pupils produce work that is well presented, neat and demonstrates real pride in their achievements. On other occasions, pupils' work is messy and careless. Teachers do not consistently hold pupils to account for work of poor quality, so it goes unchallenged.
- Recently, leaders have lifted expectations of the quality of teaching. They have provided regular coaching and training to support improvement. Leaders at all levels rigorously monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment using a range of evidence, including lesson observations and checking of pupils' work. This work is clearly supporting current improvements to the quality of teaching.

- In some classes, teaching assistants are used to good effect. They ask appropriate questions, check pupils' understanding and support effectively those who need help to succeed. However, in other classes they are deployed less effectively by teachers, for example limiting their focus to pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils receive regular homework that extends their knowledge and skills in a range of subjects. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoyed completing these tasks, such as making models of the Titanic and volcanoes. The school runs a homework club to offer help and support to any pupils who would like it, supporting their progress.
- Pupils appreciate the many exciting and interesting trips that enrich the school's curriculum. These include visits to Stonehenge, the Titanic Museum, a planetarium and a Roman villa. These enthuse pupils to learn in the associated lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about the positive relationships they enjoy in school. Pupils treat adults and their peers with respect, thoughtfulness and kindness.
- In most lessons, pupils are quick to offer help to peers when it is needed. Older pupils become able to offer constructive feedback to others. They willingly volunteer for such responsibilities as classroom monitors, school council representatives and librarians.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and say that on the few occasions that it happens, it is quickly dealt with. Pupils frown on name-calling, although they say that it is rare. They appreciate that at times some pupils get over excited, especially when playing games, and say things that they later regret. Emotional maturity and empathy are strengths of many pupils in this school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is a calm and purposeful place in which to learn. Pupils behave well in and around the school, including at lunchtime and at playtimes, including when they have to stay in because of bad weather.
- In most lessons, pupils pay close attention to the teacher, follow instructions and try to do their best.
- Some pupils take pride in their work and its presentation, and there are many examples of high-quality work in books and on display boards around the school. Nevertheless, other pupils sometimes produce work that is less than their best.
- The attendance rate of some groups of pupils was too low in 2016. However, leaders' prompt actions have enabled disadvantaged pupils, boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to attend school much more regularly this academic year.

- Leaders' efforts to improve the behaviour of a small number of boys are starting to pay dividends. Detailed behaviour records are used to identify pupils whose behaviour causes concern so that remedial action can be put in place. Several pupils spoke highly of the work of the emotional literacy support assistants in helping these boys to manage their behaviour more successfully.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below national figures, especially for those with low and middle starting points, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Rates of progress of pupils currently in the school are variable. In some classes and year groups, pupils are making good progress, but this is not true across the school, or for all groups of pupils. For example, boys' progress is slower than that of girls. Other groups, such as pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, and those who need to catch up, do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The use of pupil premium funding supports the emotional well-being of pupils effectively but the impact of this funding on their academic achievement is weaker. Disadvantaged pupils do not make consistently good progress. While improvements are evident in Year 6 and Year 4, in other year groups the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally with the same starting points shows little sign of diminishing.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is limited because leaders are not able to accurately assess the progress of pupils who have very low starting points. As a result, leaders are unclear about how effective interventions or teaching programmes have been, or how to accelerate progress.
- There are now clear signs of rising standards, especially in Year 6 in reading and mathematics. A greater proportion of pupils are on track to achieve not only the expected standard, but also the higher standard. This is due to an unswerving focus by senior leaders on improving teaching, which is starting to help pupils to make better progress. Leaders have invited pupils in Year 6 to attend some lessons at the weekend and over the Easter holiday. This is an indication of the determination that leaders and teachers have to help pupils achieve the best they possibly can, and the positive impact of their actions.
- Standards in reading are improving, although pupils say that they do not particularly enjoy books. However, they benefit from a well-resourced library staffed by a full-time librarian who helpfully guides pupils' choices when they choose books. Pupils enjoy using an online reading comprehension scheme, which rewards them for answering questions correctly. As a result, pupils are becoming more confident, capable readers.
- Pupils are starting to make better progress in writing. They write often and, as they progress through the school, are increasingly able to edit and improve their own work. Older pupils also offer helpful guidance to each other about their writing.

- Rates of progress are starting to improve in mathematics. However, this progress is not as good as it could be, because teachers do not give pupils the opportunity to apply their skills to solve problems and explain the reasoning behind their solution.

School details

Unique reference number	116092
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10024804

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	339
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rashid Brora
Headteacher	Graham James
Telephone number	02380 223634
Website	www.mountpleasantschool.org.uk
Email address	info@mountpleasantschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The largest proportions of pupils are of Pakistani, Indian and other Asian backgrounds.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than seen nationally.
- The current headteacher started in September 2015 on an interim basis.

- The school is receiving support from two teaching schools whose headteachers are national leaders of education. Part of this support has been brokered by the local authority, together with the support of an external consultant to evaluate the progress that the school is making.
- The school met the floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Some of these visits were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. While in lessons they talked to pupils and examined their books to judge the progress that they are making.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body and leaders responsible for English, mathematics, physical education, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors talked with pupils at playtime and around the school. They spoke to a group of pupils from each year group to gather their views of the school. They listened to pupils read.
- The lead inspector had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and one of the national leaders of education who is supporting the school.
- Inspectors also scrutinised a range of school documentation, including that relating to the progress that pupils make and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered 18 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 14 responses to the parent text service. There were 37 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 28 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Bruce Waelend, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Paul Shaughnessy	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Parfoot	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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