

Inspection of Mount Pleasant Primary School

Newton Lane, Darlington, County Durham DL3 9HE

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2022

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Outstanding |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at Mount Pleasant Primary School. There is a strong sense of community. Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. Bullying almost never happens. At social times, pupils play well together. In lessons, pupils respond well to staff's high expectations for behaviour and attitudes. Pupils show high levels of concentration and self-control. They are supportive of their classmates. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are extremely well supported by highly trained staff. The early years curriculum is planned carefully so that children are prepared well for Year 1.

Leaders ensure pupils understand the school virtues. For example, half-termly awards are presented for kindness. These awards are voted for by pupils. This valuable work is supported by an active school council. Pupils make a genuine contribution to the life of the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND. The curriculum is sequenced so that pupils' knowledge and skills deepen over time. Teachers revisit important knowledge often. This helps pupils to remember their learning. Teachers address pupils' misconceptions quickly and effectively. They use assessment to identify what pupils do and do not know. They respond to pupils' learning needs to make sure pupils stay on track.

Those pupils with SEND who learn within the resourced provision are well supported. The learning is appropriate to the needs of each pupil. As soon as they are ready, pupils have some of their lessons within the mainstream school. This allows all pupils to integrate, share experiences and build relationships. Pupils with SEND who are taught within mainstream lessons are equally well supported. Teachers and teaching assistants are extremely well trained.

Children in the early years learn to read quickly. If they fall behind, staff take swift action to help them catch up. Curriculum planning includes a strong focus on developing children's communication and language skills. Staff are skilled in helping children to learn and use new vocabulary. However, activities to support the teacher-led sessions are not sufficiently targeted to what individual pupils need to know. Opportunities to develop children's knowledge and skills are sometimes missed.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Routines are secure and are continually reinforced. Pupils are keen to learn and stay on task in lessons. Staff expectations are high. Pupils engage well with visitors and have excellent manners. They embody the virtues that leaders and staff have deliberately nurtured through the planned curriculum and the school's wider offer.

Governors and trust leaders are committed to developing the school. They provide many opportunities for staff training, especially around curriculum design and implementation. Curriculum knowledge is shared across the trust. Teachers benefit from this collaborative approach. Staff morale is very high.

Leaders have developed a range of effective strategies to support pupils' personal development. They are keen to provide opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities. For example, some pupils in Year 6 are part of the 'rights respecting' team. They serve as ambassadors for pupils' rights and responsibilities. They reward other pupils with points for behaving well around the school. This helps to foster positive relationships between pupils. It also reinforces high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes.

Pupils learn to treat each other fairly. They respect people of all different backgrounds and faiths. Pupils are knowledgeable about democracy and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils know how to stay safe, including online. The school offers a range of extra-curricular clubs, including yoga and magic. Clubs are updated each term so that new opportunities are readily available to pupils. The residential trip in Year 6 helps pupils to explore new skills, including climbing, and to develop confidence. Leaders rightly identified that pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their skills in debating and discussing. Leaders are working to strengthen this aspect of pupils' personal development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have built strong relationships with local families. This close communication helps leaders to keep pupils safe. Parents and carers share useful information about pupils' needs and experiences with leaders. Parents seek advice from leaders about local support services. Staff are trained well. They know how to identify pupils who might be at risk of harm. Staff report all concerns, however minor, to leaders. Leaders act on concerns quickly and effectively. They work well with other agencies, including children's social care. They proactively seek support from experts, such as the youth justice team, when appropriate. This helps leaders to stay well informed about local issues that might affect pupils and their families.

Checks are carried out to ensure staff and visitors are appropriately vetted before they are allowed into school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Activities in the early years are not sufficiently personalised to meet children's individual needs. Opportunities to develop children's knowledge and skills are

sometimes missed. Leaders should make sure that children participate in activities that meet their individual learning needs.

- Leaders have not planned enough opportunities for pupils to develop skills in debating and discussing. Pupils do not practise debating enough to become proficient. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum includes planned opportunities for pupils to gain the knowledge and skills to debate with confidence.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 143449 |
| Local authority | Darlington |
| Inspection number | 10227457 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 276 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Stuart Crowther |
| Headteacher | Rebecca Pavey |
| Website | www.mountpleasantschool.com |
| Date of previous inspection | 2 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school has a nursery provision for children aged 2 and 3.
- The school has a resourced provision for pupils with SEND. The primary need of the pupils is autism spectrum disorder.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector held several meetings with the headteacher during the inspection.

- The lead inspector met with two governors, two trustees and a representative of the chief executive officer.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and, where appropriate, looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- Safeguarding documentation and records for behaviour and attendance were checked.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the school day, including during lesson visits and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their views on behaviour and the wider experiences they receive at school.
- Inspectors reviewed the 16 responses from parents received through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 16 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 33 responses received through Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 32 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Zoe Helman, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Chris Baines | Ofsted Inspector |
| Dawn Foster | Ofsted Inspector |

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