

Inspection of a good school: Mount Pleasant Lane Primary School

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

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 October 2022

Outcome

Mount Pleasant Lane Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Mount Pleasant Lane Primary School is a kind and caring place where pupils want to do their best. Pupils experience a curriculum which links to their local community. It is broadened through trips and visits, for example, to the local river and Windsor Castle. Pupils are happy in the school.

Behaviour is calm. Pupils understand the high expectations set for them. They understand the school's values of 'we are kind; we are brave; we are responsible; we are learners', and can explain how this influences the way they behave in their day-to-day life. Pupils are respectful of each other and of staff. Pupils feel safe. They say bullying does happen occasionally, but that it doesn't happen as much as it did. When bullying does occur, staff deal with it quickly. All pupils have trusted adults that they can speak to if they are worried.

Pupils enjoy the wider development opportunities that they are offered. Clubs such as computing, art and sports help pupils to develop their interests. Pupils, including children in Nursery, love taking part in street dance lessons as part of the physical education curriculum.

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

Leaders have reviewed and put in place a curriculum which is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum outlines the concepts and the key knowledge that pupils should learn. In many subjects the content is clearly set out to support teachers to build pupils' knowledge over time. In a small number of subjects this is not the case. Where this does not happen as well, pupils do not always remember the information that is crucial for their next steps of learning.

Reading is the bedrock of leaders' curriculum. Pupils learn to read through a well-considered programme. Leaders prioritise reading in the school. Children engage with the

phonics programme as soon as they start in Reception. Pupils read books that are well matched to the sounds that they know. Story time at the end of every day is enjoyed by pupils. They speak with enthusiasm about the books that teachers read to them. Most pupils read with fluency. When pupils get stuck, they use the strategies that they know to sound out words with accuracy. Leaders put effective individual support in place to help pupils who fall behind to catch up quickly.

Curriculum content has a focus on the development of pupils' communication skills. Pupils, including those with SEND, talk with each other about their learning and speak with confidence about what they know. This helps them to remember more and become independent learners. Teachers check what pupils know and have remembered. They use this information to adapt their teaching where necessary.

Leaders have put plans in place to support pupils with SEND. Teachers are knowledgeable about strategies that best support the pupils they teach, and they adapt their teaching where necessary. As a result, pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers, and subsequently achieve well.

Routines and expectations are quickly established in early years. The curriculum has a structured learning time for phonics and early mathematics. Alongside this, the wider development of children is supported by well-thought-out activities that develop children's fine-motor skills and communication and language. This helps them to prepare for Year 1. While there are many high-quality activities provided, staff sometimes miss opportunities to use the early years environment as well as they could. This means that children's wider experiences, for example their physical development, is not as effective as it could be.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have a positive attitude to their learning. Pupils say that behaviour around the school is much better than it was. Leaders are able to demonstrate this through their detailed records linked to behaviour.

Pupils develop their wider interests beyond the classroom. For example, they demonstrate their understanding of the music curriculum during singing assemblies. Pupils answered questions using key vocabulary, for example 'tempo' and 'rhythm'. They have a love of singing and sang their harvest song with enthusiasm.

Pupils have an age-appropriate awareness of relationships, diversity, and difference. Leaders prepare them well for their life in modern Britain.

Staff, including those at the early stage of their career, feel well supported. They feel that leaders are approachable and are considerate of their workload.

Trustees and governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and areas to improve. They use this information effectively to challenge and support leaders to improve pupils' experiences at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is given a high priority by all staff within the school. Staff have been trained and are able to talk with confidence about the signs that may indicate that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders ensure that when issues linked to safeguarding take place that they respond quickly and appropriately. Well-documented records demonstrate this.

Leaders use assemblies effectively to address issues as they arise, for example online safety.

Pupils understand that they should not share their location or accept friend requests from people they do not know. Pupils say they know how to stay safe when, for example, crossing a road.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of the curriculum, leaders have not identified the order in which knowledge should be taught. This means that pupils do not routinely build on their prior learning. Leaders must ensure that they identify the order in which knowledge should be taught in all areas of the curriculum so that pupils have the opportunity to build on what they already know, and consequently learn more.
- While the curriculum in early years is structured around purposeful activities which develop children's knowledge and skills, there is not enough consideration of how the early years environment can be used more effectively to deepen children's learning in all aspects of the curriculum, for example children's physical development. Leaders need to develop rich and varied opportunities so that children effectively develop their learning across all areas of the early years curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Mount Pleasant Lane Junior Mixed and Infant School and Nursery, to be good in February 2015.

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

Unique reference number	145969
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10240359
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	295
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Marcus Cooper
Headteacher	Leanne Williams
Website	www.mountpleasant.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up their post in September 2022.
- Mount Pleasant Lane Primary School joined the Spiral Partnership Trust on 1 July 2018.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. This involved discussing the curriculum with subject leaders, visiting lessons with leaders, talking to pupils and teachers, and looking at pupils' work. The inspector observed pupils reading to a known adult.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the chief executive of the trust, the chair of the local school committee, teachers and support staff and held a short telephone call with a leader at the alternative provider that the school uses.

- Pupils talked to the inspector about their views of the school. The inspector also observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, lunchtimes, during assembly and in lessons.
- The inspector spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered the 59 responses and 59 free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also reviewed the 21 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 43 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector checked leaders' safeguarding processes. The school's single central record was checked. Records relating to safeguarding were viewed and a meeting was held with the designated safeguarding lead about how safeguarding is managed in the school.

Inspection team

Wayne Jarvis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022