INSPECTION REPORT

MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Darlington

LEA area: Darlington

Unique reference number: 114166

Headteacher: Ms D de Muschamp

Reporting inspector: Mr S Dobson 18074

Dates of inspection: $16^{th} - 18^{th}$ October 2000

Inspection number: 225364

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Newton Lane

Darlington

Postcode: DL3 9HE

Telephone number: 01325244950

Fax number:

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs A Swan

Date of previous inspection: 13th January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			
Mr S Dobson 18074	Registered inspector		
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The Registrar Inspection Quality Division The Office for Standards in Education Alexandra House 33 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Mount Pleasant Primary School serves part of the community of north-west Darlington which is an area of relatively high unemployment and considerable economic deprivation. There are 231 pupils on roll in the main school and a further 80 children attend the nursery on a part-time basis. There are almost even numbers of boys and girls. Ninety-eight per cent of the pupils are of white UK background with only two per cent from ethnic minority backgrounds. None of the pupils has English as an additional language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average and the number of pupils with special educational needs is above average. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties. Two pupils in the nursery have statements of special educational need. On entry to school, children's attainment is below that expected for their age, particularly in the development of early speaking and listening skills. One of the issues which the school faces is relatively high pupil mobility with up to 25 per cent of pupils joining the school after the initial intake.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. Many pupils come to school with lower achievements than expected for their age. Through diligent teaching and above all the high expectations of the headteacher and the teachers, the pupils make consistently good progress and they achieve good standards in all subjects of the National Curriculum. The school is very well led and managed and is extremely well placed to make further improvement. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and deputy head.
- Excellent use is made of assessment information to set appropriate and challenging targets for the pupils.
- The quality of teaching is good overall ensuring that pupils achieve well.
- The quality of care for pupils is very good. The school works particularly hard to ensure that learning opportunities are available for all pupils including those who have special educational needs
- Standards of behaviour are very good and pupils are very positive about themselves and their work.

What could be improved

- Work in the reception class needs to build on the good start that pupils have in the nursery.
- The organisation of the foundation stage to ensure that both nursery and reception play a full and equal part.
- The level of attendance is unsatisfactory, though it is improved since the time of the last inspection.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

The things which the school does well far outweigh the areas for improvement which are already known about and which are the target of development.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The main areas for improvement following the last inspection in 1997 have all been addressed. There has been very good improvement particularly in the last two years. Standards have risen because the school now has well-structured schemes for the development of reading, writing and handwriting. Very good use is made of assessment information and all staff are involved in checking what pupils can do. The schemes of work for the foundation subjects are clearly focused on developing subject skills and some exemplary practice is seen, for example, in history. Parents are now very happy with their partnership with the school and the school continually improves this aspect of its work.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by eleven-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

	Compared with				
Performance in:	а	similar schools			
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	В	Е	В	A*	
Mathematics	С	D	В	А	
Science	В	Е	А	A*	

Key	
well above average	Α
above average	В
average	С
below average	D
well below average	Е

When compared with schools of a similar background, this school does very well and in the case of both English and science, is in the top five per cent nationally. When compared with schools nationally, results are very good in all three subjects. There is some fluctuation between years; this is due to both the number of pupils with special needs in particular cohorts, and also the fact that up to 25 per cent of pupils join the school well after initial entry. The school sets itself very challenging but appropriate targets and these are shared with the pupils. The results at Key Stage 1 do not show the same high level when compared with other schools. This is a reflection of the children's starting point on entry to the school and in particular their lack of experience in the use of spoken language. Pupils achieve the same high levels in some other subjects, most noticeably in history.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and to lessons. They clearly enjoy coming to school and are ready to join in and contribute at all times.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The standard of behaviour is very good. Pupils are respectful of their teachers, of each other and of the school property and this is seen in the classroom and when they are less closely supervised outside.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils get on very well with each other and their teachers. They are always willing to help those who need it whether they are younger or those with particular needs. Everyone is accepted on his or her own merits.
Attendance	The level of attendance is unsatisfactory, being lower than the national average. Some of this is caused by pupils moving to other areas and the school not being notified that the child has left.

The standards achieved in behaviour, attitudes and the quality of relationships are strengths of the school. The pupils' enthusiasm for school is tangible; most of them hate to miss even one day. They respect and value their school and as a consequence behave very well at all times.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils: aged up to 5 years		aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years	
26 lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The teaching of both English and mathematics is almost always good and is particularly good at Key Stage 2. Lessons are well structured and move at a good pace and the pupils are fully engaged in their activities. The pupils almost always learn what the teacher intends because the teacher makes the targets of the lesson clear and pupils know what they are supposed to be doing. Where the teachers' knowledge is particularly good, pupils learn quickly because the teacher plans interesting activities, the pupils are supported in participating fully and teachers' explanations are clear. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well across the curriculum; for example, one teacher linked the writing of biographies particularly well with the history of the Tudors. Class work and work in withdrawal situations is very well matched to the needs of the pupils with special educational needs. Seventy per cent of the lessons seen were good or better with 35 per cent being very good. Only one lesson (three per cent) was unsatisfactory due to a lack of pace and pupils being unchallenged by the content. In this lesson, the children learnt very little.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a very broad and well-balanced curriculum in the nursery and both key stages but the curriculum is less good in the reception class. A major strength of the curriculum is the focus on subject specific skills, which helps pupils to further their own learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. Whether in the classroom or in withdrawal situations, the pupils are well supported because their teachers plan to meet their needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision is very good overall, particularly for pupils' social development which is excellent. All pupils are enabled to play a full part in the life of the school. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good and this is reflected in their behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a great strength of the school. The school's mission for some years has been to provide as well as possible for every pupil and this is achieved very successfully by the staff knowing the pupils and their capabilities very well. There is a strong determination that each pupil should get maximum benefit.

The school strives to include all pupils and this involves the establishment of very good working relationships with the parents and carers. Almost all of the parents are positive about the school. The pupils benefit from a very well structured and meaningful curriculum at both key stages. The school has appropriately focused on pupils developing skills and this equips them to learn for themselves. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership given by the headteacher and the deputy is exemplary. They have developed a very strong staff team and they are meticulous in reviewing the school, identifying relative strengths and weaknesses and planning for and delivering improvement. The role of the co-ordinators is developing well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	This is a relatively new governing body but already governors are very involved in the life of the school, are in a good position to offer critical support and fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is one of the strengths of the school. Excellent analysis is made of information, for example from national tests, and plans are drawn up to bring about improvement.
The strategic use of resources	In most of the school, resources are used well but there is potential to use the nursery and reception resources more effectively.

The school is very well led and managed and the management of finance is secure. The planning for school development is appropriate and appropriate targets are set. Efforts are made to seek best value when the school is looking at developments and development items are evaluated. A particular strength of management is the desire to continue to improve. There is constant review, not only of school initiatives but also of existing practice. The staff as a whole work effectively together.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved		
The parents are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school	The parents did not indicate any areas which they would like to see improved.		

The inspection team wholeheartedly endorses the parents' very positive views of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and deputy head.

- 1. The leadership given by the headteacher and the deputy head as the senior management team is excellent. Their astute interpretation of the issues which face the school is based on clear and accurate gathering of information and a very clear vision of how the school should be. In their efforts to improve the school and raise standards they have gathered and analysed all forms of performance data and this has helped all staff to know what is needed to help each pupil. Analysis of pupils' work in test and other situations has helped to establish targets for improvement. From this detailed understanding of each pupil's needs has come overall school improvement.
- 2. The school collectively is self-confident and the staff are therefore unafraid to address any difficulties which arise. In the main there is very open and honest dialogue and a genuine desire to change for improvement. This has led to discussion, action and improvement of many aspects of the school's provision including planning of the curriculum at both key stages.
- 3. One of the main strengths of leadership and management is the central purpose of seeking the very best for each pupil and this purpose is the driving force for the teachers, the managers and the governing body. This is at the heart of school development and is the main criterion by which success is judged. This is very helpful in giving everyone a unity of purpose.

Excellent use is made of assessment information to set appropriate and challenging targets for the pupils.

- 4. The staff make very good use of assessment information to inform the planning of the curriculum both in the long term when reviewing subjects and schemes of work, and in the short term on a lesson by lesson basis.
- Very detailed analysis of test results helps the staff to identify both improvements which could be made in the way in which subjects are planned and taught and areas in which particular pupils or groups of pupils need additional help. The knowledge gained from this analysis is built into curriculum planning by the co-ordinators who are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects.
- 6. On a week by week basis, teachers look at the outcomes of their lessons in terms of pupils' performance and make constant adjustments to their teaching in order to meet pupils' real needs accurately. This ensures that the curriculum is always relevant.
- 7. Targets for learning are shared with most classes at the beginning of each lesson and checked at the end. This enables the pupils to assess whether they have achieved what they should have done and they are able to talk with the teachers about successes and concerns. In addition, in some classes and some subjects, pupils are given individual learning targets which they work towards and achieve.
- 8. Because the teachers have similar mixed age classes at Key Stage 2, they can share their ideas and concerns and this enriches the planning process. This is a planning model which could be usefully applied to the foundation stage.

The quality of teaching is good overall ensuring that pupils achieve well.

- 9. The teaching staff have agreed that the focus of all subjects of the curriculum should be on the skills that the pupils should gain, and that all of the subjects should contribute to overall skill development. This has led to curriculum planning which makes the most of the links which exist between subjects and therefore efficient use is made of curriculum time. One example of this was seen in a Y5/6 class where the teacher had linked literacy work very well with history and art and as a result, pupils gained knowledge and understanding in all areas. The success of this approach was due to the teacher using and reinforcing pupils' skills at an appropriately challenging level for their ages and abilities. Other major pieces of work throughout both key stages show a similarly profitable use of cross-curricular links, for example, topic work on 'where we live' which supported very good mathematics work.
- 10. The quality of teaching is predominantly good and it is often very good in Key Stage 2. Teachers have generally good knowledge of the subjects which they teach and mostly they prepare well for lessons. They plan well, identifying clear learning targets which they share with the pupils. This gives the pupils a clear view of what they are to learn. Teachers' expectations are very high. Most of the work is very challenging and pupils often seek help. However, they also gain the reward of real learning in most lessons. All of the teachers manage pupil behaviour very well and because behaviour is very good, all of the pupils are able to participate fully.
- 11. The school has chosen to devote resources to having additional adults in the classroom. The class support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and they are very well informed by the class teachers.

The quality of care for pupils is very good. The school works particularly hard to ensure that learning opportunities are available for all pupils including those who have special educational needs.

- 12. The staff work hard to include everyone. There is a well written policy for social inclusion and in particular pupils with special educational needs, those whose families are involved with social services and those pupils who enter school part way through the year are considered. The teaching and other staff have good guidance on how to respond to these situations in order that all pupils get the maximum benefit from their education.
- 13. Very good assessment of the academic and personal development of each pupil means that all of the staff are very well informed about individual pupils. This knowledge helps the school to give maximum support to each of the pupils and their families.
- 14. All aspects of welfare, health and safety are considered by the staff and the pupils are completely secure both physically and emotionally in the school. They are always assured of a member of staff who will listen to their concerns and celebrate their successes with them. One of the assemblies each week is concerned with the celebration of pupils' achievements. The school has very good procedures to assure child protection.
- 15. The educational provision is planned to involve pupils as fully as possible. From the start of their time in school whether in the nursery or for those who join part way through the year, children are taught to respect themselves and others and this forms an important part of the school ethos. Older pupils regularly help and support the younger ones, around the school, through reading partners and at lunchtimes. On visits out of school, the older pupils fulfil this role of caring for others. In classes, more able

pupils regularly support others. The contribution of each pupil is recognised not only by the staff but also by the children themselves. The staff work hard to meet everyone's particular needs including those with special educational needs.

Standards of behaviour are very good and pupils are very positive about themselves and their work.

- 16. All of the teachers manage behaviour very well and any misbehaviour is dealt with very rapidly. The parents describe the school as being fair and the pupils recognise this. As a consequence of the high standards expected, pupils work in a very positive atmosphere and are therefore able to make the most of their opportunities.
- 17. The pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and approach each day and each lesson as both a challenge and an opportunity. There is great enthusiasm for learning in almost every subject. The pupils show respect for others and for school life. There is very little evidence of damage; pupils take good care of resources and equipment.
- 18. Almost all of the pupils are polite, open and very honest. They express their opinions openly and appropriately expect that their opinions and ideas will be listened to and in return, they are very willing to listen to others. This creates an atmosphere in which learning together can take place harmoniously.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Work in the reception class needs to build on the good start that children have in the nursery.

- 19. The planning for the nursery and reception classes is based on the six areas of learning for the Foundation Stage and is linked to the Early Learning Goals. However, in the reception class, there are occasions when the planning for individual lessons is inappropriately geared towards the National Curriculum subjects. In some instances in the reception class the learning targets for lessons are not clearly stated and the lessons are not well matched to the needs of the pupils.
- 20. Often, the lessons are too easy for many of the children and the pace at which they are expected to learn is too slow. Whilst the children are very well behaved, after a while they pay only limited attention to the content of the lesson and therefore learning is slow. Some of the activities which are provided for the children, lack appropriate challenge, for example when children are given numbers 1 to 10 and then asked to count on slowly. Because the focus of the lesson is not always clear, the adults supporting the children are only able to offer general help.
- 21. Overall, the assessment of what the children are able to do is unsatisfactory and therefore the teacher is not able to plan appropriately. Systematic records, similar to those in the nursery, are not kept on each of the areas of learning and on each pupil.
- 22. The provision of learning areas and tasks within the classroom is not appropriate for children of this age. There are too few structured activities from which pupils can consolidate and extend their learning through practical activities.

The organisation of the foundation stage to ensure that both nursery and reception play a full and equal part.

- 23. The reception class has historically been much more closely linked with Key Stage 1 than with the nursery class and this is now a missed opportunity for the school to have a clear foundation stage. This is clearly demonstrated in the carousel; lessons which involve mixed age groups in reception and Key Stage 1. The carousel is in itself a very valuable social learning experience for all of the pupils and one which the school rightly wishes to maintain. However, currently the activities as planned are either too simple for the oldest and most able pupils or too advanced for the majority of four-year-olds.
- 24. The school understands clearly that through the foundation curriculum, its task is to move children from their point of entry to school to reach the early learning goals and move easily into Key Stage 1. There is therefore a need for the reception class to plan for this transition. It needs to mirror the broad range of opportunities for independent learning currently available in the nursery setting and gradually move the children towards the Key Stage 1 provision.
- 25. At the moment, there are very few meaningful and attractive areas for children to work in. They have very few choices in the school day and therefore little independent learning takes place. Many of the resources which are used are insufficient or of poor quality and they are not particularly attractive to the children. Many of the more formal lessons are too long.
- 26. There is no outdoor provision for children under five years old in the reception class. There is the potential to share the outside area with the nursery and to develop this area further.

The level of attendance is unsatisfactory, though it is improved since the time of the last inspection.

- 27. The school provides a very good education and it is therefore regrettable that the level of attendance is below that of most schools. In part this is caused by pupil movement from school to school but there is also a significant element of pupils simply missing odd days.
- 28. The school has good procedures in place to attempt to improve attendance and these must be continued and enhanced. At the moment some families clearly do not consider it crucial that their children attend regularly.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 29. This is a very good school which is well placed to improve even further. In order to do so, the headteacher and governing body should:
 - ☐ Improve the provision in the reception class by:
 - planning a curriculum which better meets the individual needs of these children;
 - providing a much bigger range of activities which will reinforce and extend the children's learning;
 - significantly improving the quality of the learning environment and in particular the provision out of doors.

- Review the organisation of the school so that the foundation stage becomes a cohesive unit by:
 - organising planning links between the nursery and reception classes;
 - ensuring that the curriculum for the foundation stage is progressive and challenging and links well to the curriculum for Key Stage 1.
- ☐ Improve the rate of attendance by:
 - continuing to encourage families to get pupils to school regularly;
 - better publicising the importance of regular attendance;
 - convincing families and the community of the high quality of the education available.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed 26

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils 10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	35	35	27	3	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	40	231
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	89

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	68

_	English as an additional language	No of pupils
	Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	46
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	21	11	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	16	13
	Girls	7	7	8
	Total	24	23	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (66)	71(65)	65 (58)
	National	82 (80)	80 (81)	86 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	14
	Girls	13	13	11
	Total	27	28	25
Percentage of pupils	School	79 (66)	82 (65)	74 (66)
at NC level 2 or above	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	18	19	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	16	16
	Girls	16	15	17
	Total	31	31	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (62)	83 (84)	89 (81)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	15
	Girls	16	15	16
	Total	31	30	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (62)	81 (59)	83 (62)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	3
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	267
Any other minority ethnic group	

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	33

Education support staff: YR - Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	222

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	40

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	84

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
1	

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	450,409
Total expenditure	437,972
Expenditure per pupil	1,516
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	12,537

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out 311

Number of questionnaires returned 50

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	44	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	48	0	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	50	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	52	0	0	4
The teaching is good.	66	30	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	42	6	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	30	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	22	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	58	38	2	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	70	30	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	44	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	40	4	2	4