



Mount Pleasant Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114166
LEA Darlington
Inspection number 279327
Inspection dates 28 November 2005 to 29 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs Margaret Shepherd

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Newton Lane
School category	Community		Darlington
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		County Durham DL3 9HE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01325 244950
Number on roll	272	Fax number	01325 244951
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Lynne Henderson
Date of previous inspection	1 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Broome

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 28 November 2005 - 29 November 2005	Inspection number 279327
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Mount Pleasant Primary School serves an area with high levels of social deprivation on the outskirts of Darlington. Over 54% of children are eligible for free school meals and there are more children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than average. The school has a unit for 14 autistic children aged from 5 to 11 years. Children enter the nursery with standards that are below average overall and well below average in communication and personal development. Many of the school governors are new to their roles, including the chair. The school shares its site with a new Children's Centre.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. This confirms the school's own judgement of itself. Achievement is consistently good through the school. Personal development and well-being are good overall. Children's behaviour is outstanding and they thoroughly enjoy their learning. Attendance levels are below average but are improving. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are good. Care, guidance and support are good with excellent features. Leadership and management are good overall, but several governors do not have a clear understanding of their roles because they are so new to their posts. The children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is good but the quality of education is satisfactory overall. Indoors, the quality of education is good, but outdoors it is inadequate. The provision and achievement in the Autistic Unit are good. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection and the school's capacity to improve is good.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase attendance rates further.
- Improve the curriculum for outdoor learning in the Foundation Stage.
- Extend the role of the governors in the work of the school and support the new governors in taking up their new responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's achievement is consistently good through the school. From the below average standards on entry to the school, children reach average standards overall in Year 6. The school sets itself challenging targets and then strives to reach them. The children's progress in Years 3 to 6 is good, particularly so in science. The 2005 National Curriculum test results in science were in the top 5% nationally. Children are particularly confident in investigative science. Standards in independent writing are higher than other aspects in English. Children write very imaginatively and choose vocabulary to very good effect, such as in a story of Little Red Riding Hood written from the wolf's perspective. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, both in the main school and in the Autistic Unit, achieve well. More able children make good progress through the school. Achievement in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. A newly established team of teachers is raising standards in these classes and quickening the children's progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being are good with outstanding features. This does not fully match the school's own judgement that these aspects are

outstanding. The children's behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. Despite the excitement of the first fall of snow this year, children remained sensible and considerate of each other's needs. Children thoroughly enjoy their lessons and work hard to complete their tasks. They take every opportunity to take part in the wide range of activities outside lessons. The personal development of children in the Autistic Unit is outstanding. These children play a full part in lessons and have an excellent attitude towards their work and play, both within their own classrooms and when they join in with the rest of the school.

Children make good progress in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a very good understanding of right and wrong. They develop a good understanding of their role in the community, both when they respond to visitors coming into the school and when they go out to places such as the local church or shops. Children take their responsibilities seriously and expect to play a role in decisions to improve the school. For example, they requested a milk bar in addition to school lunches to extend the choice of healthy foods. Children understand the importance of exercise and they are clear about how to stay safe. They are developing good skills to ensure their future economic well-being and enjoy taking part in mini-enterprise projects. They work very well together in teams and expect to be flexible in taking different roles in order to complete their tasks.

Although attendance rates are unsatisfactory, they are improving this term and are much nearer to the national average figures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and have some outstanding features. Teachers and teaching assistants work extremely well together and succeed in addressing the needs of different groups and individuals. Teachers plan carefully to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to challenge more able children. In Years 5 and 6, for example, teachers plan jointly for lessons in English and mathematics, resulting in the work being pitched accurately to address the varying needs of the children. Teachers manage children's behaviour extremely well and organise their lessons effectively. There is a high priority for ensuring that children work together cooperatively in teams to solve problems, such as organising a test of materials to establish their conductivity of electricity or their magnetic properties. In the best lessons, there is a very fast pace with very good use of the interactive whiteboards. Teachers manage the move between whole class sessions and group work smoothly, maximising the time available for learning. Teaching in the Autistic Unit is good. Staff plan very carefully to match individual learning needs and skilfully demonstrate the small steps expected in the new learning. Despite having been together only a short time, the teaching team in the Nursery and Reception unit works very well and provides some very exciting work in the indoor areas, such as children measuring themselves by lying on brightly coloured woolly scarves of different lengths.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It builds carefully on children's previous learning and provides interesting experiences, particularly in the arts. A good range of visits out in the community and visitors into the school add to the curriculum's interest and relevance for the children. The arrangements for reducing numbers in classes for literacy, numeracy and science for older children work well and augment the quality of learning in these subjects. There is a good curriculum to develop children's future economic well-being with a regular emphasis on working in teams and on taking part in fundraising activities and mini-enterprise projects. The school considers its curriculum very carefully to ensure that all children have equal access to the experiences provided. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities both sporting and cultural. The curriculum in the Autistic Unit is good. The indoor curriculum in the Nursery and Reception unit is of a good quality and well-balanced. It provides exciting experiences for children, such as experimenting with mounds of bubbles in the water tray. The outdoor curriculum for these age groups is inadequate and does not offer systematic learning across the full curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with outstanding features. This does not fully match the school's judgement that it is outstanding. The school provides a good rather than outstanding quality of guidance for children to support them in their future learning. The outstanding features are in the care and support aspects. Staff place a very high priority in ensuring that children are kept safe and healthy. They know and respond to individual children's different needs very well. Parents are very appreciative of the school's work. A comment was 'The teaching, care and understanding of the children are excellent'. The provision in the Autistic Unit is outstanding. Staff support every aspect of the children's learning needs. The school greatly values the provision of the Children's Centre, however the centre has only just began its work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher sets a clear educational direction for the work of the school and is strongly committed to raising standards and extending children's personal development and well-being. The school's leadership establishes a clear vision and a calm working context for learning. The leadership and management of the Autistic Unit are good. Good quality monitoring and evaluation systems are used efficiently to identify key weaknesses and implement necessary changes. A good example is the nursery and reception provision where the accommodation has been changed to provide one unit. A key teacher has been appointed to raise the profile of this age group, with a view to raising standards further.

The school has outstanding systems for ensuring that children are fully included in the school's provision. The integration of the children from the Autistic Unit into the main school is excellent. The school has good methods for self-evaluation that provide an accurate view of key aspects of its work. It values the views of children, parents and stakeholders and acts effectively on their suggestions, such as the children's request of providing fruit for the junior classes. The budget surplus is too high but important priorities have been set for its use, for example to provide teaching assistants to support individuals and groups. The quality of governance is satisfactory. The governing body, which has a number of new members, is undertaking training to improve its effectiveness. The headteacher is working hard to extend the range of their work. A suitable system of committees has recently been established.

The school has improved well since the previous inspection and its capacity for further improvement is good. The headteacher has the confidence of the whole staff, who are keen to work together to improve the school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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Mrs Gillian Broome

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DL3 9HE

30 November 2005

Dear Children

Thank you very much for welcoming us into your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work.

The best things about your school are:

the quality of your work and the good progress that you make as you move through the school

the really exciting and interesting stories that you write

the way that you carry out experiments in science

your excellent behaviour both in lessons and around the school

your great enjoyment in doing your work

the way that you work together in teams and cooperate

the way that you use the suggestions box so sensibly and the good ideas that you have to make the school a more healthy place

the very good Autistic Unit

the good teachers that you have that work so well with your teaching assistants

your good quality curriculum, the exciting visits you go on and the interesting visitors that come into your school

your headteacher and deputy headteacher, who know and care for you all so well.

One of the things that we have asked your school to do is to get fewer children staying off from school. Another thing is to make your outdoor learning in Reception and Nursery better.

You have a lot of new governors in your school, so we have asked them to learn about all the new things that they have to do, and to meet more often in their new committees.

Best wishes

Maggi Shepherd, Mary Sewell, Iain Rodger

Lead inspector and team inspectors