

Mount Pleasant Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116092
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	290417
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Brora
Headteacher	Mr J Wells
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Mount Pleasant Road Southampton SO14 0WZ
Telephone number	0238 0223634
Fax number	0238 0480020

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Mount Pleasant Junior School is an average sized junior school serving an area close to the centre of Southampton. Levels of social and economic deprivation are significantly above average. The school population is ethnically diverse: almost all students come from Black or minority ethnic groups and are learning English as an additional language. The school experiences high levels of mobility and many pupils join the school in the very early stages of acquiring English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is close to the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Mount Pleasant Junior School is providing a satisfactory standard of education.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The 2006 national tests indicate that pupils made satisfactory progress in English, but inadequate progress in mathematics and science. This underachievement was linked to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. There is clear evidence that the consistency of lessons has improved and that, as a result, pupils are now making satisfactory progress. However, there remains a legacy of underachievement in some year groups. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and the proportion of good or better teaching has increased in the past year. In a few lessons, teaching lacks pace and activities are not matched closely enough to pupils' needs. The curriculum is satisfactory. Changes were made this year to ensure that teachers are able to focus sharply on the key areas of literacy and numeracy.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall with some areas of strength. Pupils enjoy their education and are generally positive about school. Attendance has been well below national averages for a number of years. The school has focused sharply on this area. As a result, while still below average, attendance has increased significantly this year. The majority of pupils behave well, although the behaviour of some pupils can impede the flow of the lesson in some classes. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and improving. Pupils are well cared for by the school. Systems for monitoring their academic achievement have improved considerably over the past year, although it is too early to see the impact of this on pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been in post for nearly two years. During that time he has correctly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has taken sensible and well thought out actions to support the school's development. While they are yet to have their full impact, these actions are already leading to improvements in the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils. Changes made to leadership across the school, through the appointment of year leaders, are beginning to help raise achievement. The school has demonstrated a clear capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise levels of achievement further across the school.
- Increase the proportion of consistently good or better teaching.
- Improve pupils' attendance and reduce levels of unauthorised absence.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next S5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils entering the school at the beginning of Year 3 generally have standards that are slightly below the national average, although there is considerable variation between different year groups. A significant proportion of pupils also join the school later in Year 3 or in other year groups.

Pupils taking the national tests in 2006 entered the school with below average standards. At the end of Year 6 they attained standards that were below average in English, but well below average in mathematics and science. Given the pupils' capabilities and starting points, this represented satisfactory progress in English, but unsatisfactory progress in mathematics and science. During the inspection the school were able to demonstrate very clearly that pupils across the school are making greater progress this year and that their achievement is now satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils enjoy school and participate enthusiastically in school activities. Attendance has improved significantly over the past year, although it is still below average and levels of unauthorised absence remain high. The school is working hard with parents and other local schools to promote regular attendance and to discourage extended periods abroad. Most pupils are well behaved but there are a few, mainly boys, who's silly behaviour can hinder their own and other's learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Those on the school council take their responsibilities seriously and have made a valuable contribution to improving playground activities and arrangements. Pupils also make a positive contribution to the wider community, for example, by raising funds for well known charities and by performing Asian dance routines in the local community. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and possess a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. They are reasonably well prepared for the future because by the time they leave they have acquired sound literacy and numeracy skills and their personal and social skills are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Teachers have good relationships with their classes and most manage their pupils well. The purpose of the lessons is clearly shared with the class so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers' demonstrations, explanations and questioning usually promote learning well. Most pupils are attentive and respond well to their teachers. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss their work and to participate in role-play activities. As a result, pupils are making better progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Assessment has improved recently and is usually used well to match tasks to pupils' different abilities and needs. This is helping to ensure that pupils are interested and challenged by their work.

However, in a few lessons, the pace is slower and tasks are not sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs. Learning declines when challenge and pace are less strong. In some cases, teachers spend too long talking to the whole class and pupils lose interest. Learning assistants provide good support to pupils who need it. However, they can be less effective when teachers' introductions are overlong.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and supports pupils' satisfactory achievement and personal development. The school made a number of changes to the curriculum in September 2006 to focus more sharply on literacy and numeracy. This has helped teachers to concentrate on these key areas and has supported an improvement in pupils' achievement. The school is now looking to develop the curriculum to support further links between different curriculum subjects. The introduction of year leader posts is helping teachers and teaching assistants to plan more closely together in year teams.

The school offers a wide range of enrichment opportunities and activities beyond the school day. Pupils enjoy these opportunities and participation rates are high.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Adults know the pupils well and have established good relationships with them and with their parents. Effective induction arrangements enable new pupils to settle quickly. A good number of bilingual assistants provide much needed support to pupils and their parents. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are good. Pupils confirm that there is little bullying and are confident that the school will deal with any incidents quickly and effectively.

Assessment and tracking of pupils' attainment has improved recently and the school now has a clearer picture of how well each individual is doing. Assessment is used appropriately to plan teaching and to set individual learning targets in English and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a thorough and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has set a clear vision for improvement which staff increasingly share. Teachers understand that standards need to rise and they are committed to making the necessary improvements. While it is not yet possible to see their full impact, actions taken over the past 18 months have been well thought out and appropriate. They have made a measurable impact on the quality of the school's provision and on pupils' personal development and achievement. Effective action has been taken to improve the quality and consistency of teaching. Recently developed systems enable leaders to track children's progress more closely and to hold staff more accountable for the performance of pupils in their classes.

The school's middle leadership structure has recently been revised. Year group leaders have been introduced to oversee teaching, learning and pupil progress in each year group. This is already leading to better leadership across the school and to a sharper focus on achievement and improvement. Governors also have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are providing appropriate challenge and support. The school works well in partnership with others to improve provision. It works closely with the community and a recently introduced parents' forum allows parents to put their views and ideas forward to the school. A number of changes have been made as a result of the group's suggestions. The Local Authority has provided effective help to the school to support its improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mount Pleasant Junior School, Southampton, SO14 0WZ

Thank you for the welcome that you gave us when we visited your school. We are particularly grateful to the members of the school council and to the groups of pupils who met with us. We judged that your school is providing a satisfactory standard of education and that the headteacher and staff are doing the right things to make the school even better in the future.

Pupils didn't do very well in the national tests last year. Part of the reason for this was that teaching was not consistently strong in all classes. As a result, you didn't always make enough progress. We saw many good lessons during the inspection and we could see that teaching has improved over the past year. We have said that this is the most important area for the school to focus on so that your lessons are consistently good. This will help you to make more progress and to do well in the national tests at the end of Year 6.

The school looks after you well and helps you to develop as young people. Staff know you well and want you to succeed and be happy. They are now doing much more to track how well you are doing in your work. They can then see if you fall behind and give you extra help if you need it. Some pupils take long periods of time away from school and this affects their learning. The school has been working hard to solve this problem and attendance has improved this year. We have said that it is important to continue working at this area. We were impressed by the behaviour of most pupils, although a few sometimes misbehave in some classes and this can slow learning down.

We talked to your headteacher, the deputy head and one of the school's governors before we left. We encouraged them to continue with the improvements that they are making.

Yours faithfully

Chris Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector