

# Mount Pleasant Lane Junior Mixed and Infant School and Nursery

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117347
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312579
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jackie Cousins

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	322
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Pat Garrard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Jukes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 February 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Mount Pleasant Lane Bricket Wood St. Albans Hertfordshire AL2 3XA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 672729

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 September 2008
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**Fax number**

01923 894738

<b>Age group</b>	3-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school. Most the pupils are from White British backgrounds and a small proportion are from minority ethnic groups. The level of knowledge that many pupils start at school with is in line with expectations for three-year-olds. The proportion of pupils who have additional learning or social and emotional needs is below average. The school has the Healthy School Award and information and communication technology (ICT) Mark.

A private enterprise manages the 'Time Out Club', which offers pupils care before and after school every day of the school term and for most weeks of the school holidays.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Mount Pleasant Lane Junior Mixed Infant School and Nursery is a good place to learn. The pupils get a good start to their education. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities settle quickly into school life whether they start at the school in the Nursery, Reception or any other year group. This is because a good partnership is in place between the staff, parents and other agencies. One parent summed it up by saying, 'We have been very happy with the school and could not fault the teaching and support staff who have made our children's school days very enjoyable and productive.' Nearly all parents who responded to the questionnaire were really pleased that their children were safe and cared for well. The school's leadership works thoughtfully to unite the community. For example, sessions are held to assist parents to understand the new system of teaching children to use letter sounds when they learn to read and write. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are incorporated profitably into school life because of the senior leadership team's conscientious commitment to including them.

The school's leadership places a very high emphasis on promoting the pupils' self-confidence and zest for learning. All staff offer pupils a dedicated and effective level of care and support. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. A real strength of the school is behaviour, which is outstanding, because staff guide pupils respectfully. Pupils concentrate very well and have really positive attitudes to their learning. This is because of the ways that staff enthuse them; for example younger pupils said they really like, 'writing, story telling and working.' Attendance and punctuality are above average and the school monitors these aspects carefully. The school does not always create pupils' targets effectively in all classes and so they and their parents do not have a deep understanding of how to attain higher levels of skill, especially in writing.

Pupils' enjoyment in many school activities is clearly evident. This is mostly because of the wide variety of interesting projects planned by the school. The curriculum is well thought out and is enriched by the teaching of French, music, sport and ICT. In 2008, standards were above average by Year 6 in reading, mathematics and science and pupils achieved well. Standards in writing by Year 6 were average. In Year 2, standards were above average and in writing they were exceptionally high for the third year in a row. Teaching is good and so pupils make effective gains in their learning. The good use of practical teaching methods ensures that pupils develop their key skills well. Planning for lessons does not always set specific objectives for different groups of pupils and so they are not sure about how to evaluate their successes.

Good leadership from the headteacher and senior team of teachers mean the school has made effective improvements since the last inspection. For example, pupils' standards of mathematics in Year 2 have improved significantly. The school is in a good position to continue improving in the future. Leaders monitor standards well but the system to track pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 in speaking and listening is not fully developed. This means that the staff do not have a detailed understanding for what level of understanding pupils are working at in this area of learning.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and standards are slightly above average by the start of Year 1. Standards of physical development are above average

but mathematical development is broadly average. Children develop their basic skills well because staff have high expectations of them and deepen their understanding successfully. Children learn to read and write using letter sounds effectively because of the structured way it is taught. Areas outside the classroom are used well to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, children learn successfully what bulbs need to grow because resources are used effectively. The leadership of this stage of education is good. This means that children have rich opportunities to learn in the inside and outside areas and use ICT in a wide variety of ways. They enjoy learning to use ICT because activities are planned thoughtfully which really interest them. Children's personal development is good because staff care and guide them very effectively. Children in the Nursery happily share musical instruments due to the thoughtful way that staff manage them. At least one member of staff has up to date first aid training but none have a qualification particularly focused on handling the needs of young children.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Make sure that older pupils' progress is tracked more carefully in speaking and listening skills in order to raise standards even higher.
- Ensure that more specific objectives for lessons are agreed so that pupils can evaluate their successes more fully.
- Make sure that parents and pupils understand in more detail how to meet individual learning targets, especially in writing for Years 3 to 6.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well from Nursery to Year 6. Throughout the school those with additional needs make good progress because they have effective support from staff and the coordinator. From a starting point that broadly matches with the national expectation, pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards in Year 2 have been above average for the last four years.

In 2007, in Year 6 tests boys and girls attained similar standards. In 2008, from an average starting point in Year 3, pupils made good progress by the time they left the school in reading, mathematics and science. Although standards by Year 6 were above average overall they were average in writing. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve well because teachers have high expectations of them.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is reflected in their excellent behaviour and in the positive relationships they form with others. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They work and play harmoniously together and demonstrate a keen sense of community. Pupils of all ages feel they can contribute effectively to school life and the very active school council gives them regular opportunities to experience the democratic process. Pupils develop a good understanding of other cultures and faiths through various areas of the curriculum and enrichment activities. Through fund raising and a worthwhile link with a school in Africa, pupils show an understanding of the challenges people in other parts of the world face. They show real commitment to healthy lifestyles by consciously eating more fruit and taking part in many physical activities. Pupils feel very well cared for and free from bullying. With the good academic standards they attain and the physical, technological and

enterprise skills they acquire pupils are well prepared for the future. Pupils do not have a detailed idea of how to make the next steps in their learning because individual targets are not always specific enough and parents do not receive a copy of them.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is effective and assists pupils to achieve well. Teachers use questioning thoughtfully and so pupils learn to think deeply for themselves. Good teaching methods develop pupils' basic skills well. For example, Year 5 pupils learn how to subtract complex numbers because practical demonstrations are used successfully. Assessment activities are utilised effectively and especially to identify those pupils who are underachieving. The use of skilled teaching assistants and teachers with smaller groups mean pupils receive valuable extra attention. Not all pupils are extended fully in lessons because teachers' planning does not consistently set specific objectives against which pupils can evaluate their successes.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is developing successfully. The provision for literacy and numeracy across the school is good. Projects are well planned and the links between areas of learning are being made more fully. Curricular planning is beginning to emphasise the importance of teaching key skills but this is not always successfully achieved. Different groups of pupils are catered for well. Provision and individual education plans for pupils with additional needs supports them well and usually contain targets through which progress can be measured. Pupils have a good choice of extra activities including sports and music. ICT is used well to develop basic skills and enhance pupils' learning. For instance, Year 3 pupils have valuable opportunities to learn to change the size and colour of pieces of writing. Classroom sizes for older pupils are small and rather limit pupils' learning opportunities. For instance, pupils cannot easily set up science investigations and it is difficult for staff to move around the rooms freely.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school takes its responsibilities for the pastoral care of its pupils very seriously. Its emphasis on providing a secure environment enables pupils to have confidence in the school. Staff provide an effective framework in which pupils are gently but firmly guided to learn, and this ensures good working relationships. The school has responded well to local and national initiatives to ensure pupils are safeguarded. Pupils themselves emphasise how their personal and social education, including contributions from visitors to the school such as the police, help guide them to an understanding of their own responsibilities. The development of assessment and marking strategies has been a priority for the school. A good system is in place to monitor pupils' progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science, but this is not yet the case in speaking and listening skills.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a strong senior leadership team that provides clear direction to the work of the school. The drive for improvement is underpinned by a commitment to the professional development of all leaders and staff. Extensive training gives subject leaders the knowledge and confidence to lead their subject areas well and spread good practice to colleagues. The monitoring of lesson planning is not always carried out successfully. This means that occasionally planning for Years 3 to 6 does not ensure that pupils are clear about how to take the next steps in their learning. The management of the support for pupils with additional learning or language needs is good. This builds on effective liaison with outside agencies. The school is always looking for ways to improve and so the leadership is exploring how it can challenge gifted and talented pupils more extensively. The governing body is well informed and actively involved in continuous school improvement.



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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

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

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

12th September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Mount Pleasant Lane Junior Mixed Infant School and Nursery, St. Albans, AL2  
3XA

Thank you for helping us to find out about your school. We enjoyed watching lessons and talking to some of you. You are lucky to attend such a happy and friendly school. Good things about your school include the fact that:

- you make good progress in your work
- you concentrate and behave exceptionally well in lessons
- you really enjoy all the things you do at school
- your headteacher and deputy headteacher have good ideas about ways to improve the school
- teaching is good and the staff work hard to make lessons interesting
- a good partnership is in place between the school and your parents
- staff care for you well and listen to you thoughtfully.

We have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to:

- make sure that your progress is tracked more carefully in speaking and listening
- help you use objectives for lessons to check how well you are doing
- make sure that you and your parents understand in more detail how to meet your individual learning targets.

Keep enjoying all the things you are learning at Mount Pleasant Lane Junior Mixed Infant School and Nursery.

Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector