

INSPECTION REPORT

MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dudley

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103789

Headteacher: Mrs G Bedford

Reporting inspector: Fran Gillam
21498

Dates of inspection: 19th – 20th November 2001

Inspection number: 194459

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery, infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Mount Pleasant
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West Midlands

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dr S Tucker

Date of previous inspection: April 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Mount Pleasant School is bigger than most other primaries. It was built in 1888 to serve the families employed in local industries. The school still caters for descendants of these families although the area now has mainly retail outlets. Three hundred and ninety-six pupils attend the school; 201 boys and 195 girls. There are 14 classes arranged by age. Children in the Foundation Stage¹ are taught in the nursery and the reception class. There are 26 children in the reception class and 60 children attend the nursery part-time. When children start school in the nursery their attainment is below average overall. Almost all pupils come from a white United Kingdom background; there is a small number of pupils of Indian and black Caribbean origin. One child comes from a home where English is not the first language spoken and needs help in learning English. There are 12 per cent of pupils on the school's special educational needs register and this is below the national average. Three pupils have a statement of special educational need, which is approximately one per cent and this is broadly average. There are 29 pupils entitled to free school meals and this is 8.6 per cent and broadly average. The school has had recent difficulties in recruiting staff to cover long-term illness and staff vacancies, which affected the pupils in Year 6 last year. The children's centre adjacent to the nursery is the school's response to supporting families in the community and in providing a good start for children.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Mount Pleasant is a very effective school because it successfully includes all pupils and promotes their personal and academic achievements very well. By Year 6, standards are above average in English and mathematics, and as expected in science in the work seen. Teaching is very good because teachers expect the very best from their pupils. Lessons are often inspirational; pupils are most eager to learn; they work extremely hard and, because of this, they learn quickly and make good progress. The headteacher, staff and governors are an extremely effective team: they have a clear view of what they need to do and why, and outstanding arrangements for checking out how well pupils and staff are doing and by using this information effectively to set targets for improvement. Importantly, the action they take is effective in raising standards. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Almost all pupils learn very well because teaching is very good.
- The leadership of the headteacher and the management of senior staff and governors are outstanding.
- Pupils are very eager to learn and do well because the school fosters their personal development exceptionally well.
- The school is at the heart of the community; relationships with parents are excellent.
- The school provides a rich and exciting range of activities for children from three to eleven years.

What could be improved

- The use of assessments to identify any imbalance in how well girls are doing compared with boys and vice versa.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement since the time of the last inspection in April 1997. Although standards have risen in line with the national trend over time, and the school has been doing better than similar schools, these standards were not maintained in the tests in 2001 for the oldest pupils in mathematics and science. Both teachers in that year group left almost simultaneously, leaving the school in the unenviable position of having to find two teachers in a very short time. This proved to be a disruption to pupils' learning, affecting a small group of girls in particular, and lowered standards in the 2001 tests. By comparison, standards by Year 2 were maintained in reading and writing and improved considerably in mathematics. The standards by Year 2 are above average and better than schools of a similar background. Standards by Year 6, in the work seen, in English and mathematics are above average and as expected in science; standards are back on course in Year 6. Almost all of the areas needing improvement from the time of the last inspection are now better than they were. There are now outstanding arrangements for assessing how well pupils are doing; the school uses

¹ The stage of learning for children aged three years, up to the end of the reception year when pupils are ready to move into Year 1 and start the National Curriculum.

these effectively to provide support for individual pupils. Although the pupils' skills in researching are better and successful use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to gather information, the library has not been fully developed because of the lack of space. The provision for developing pupils' multicultural awareness has improved and this reflects in the music and art curriculum and the visitors to and visits out of school. The Foundation Stage has much improved because there are more opportunities for children to learn by exploring and finding things out for themselves across all the areas of learning².

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	D	B	C	B
Mathematics	B	C	E	D
Science	C	C	D	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The test results in 2001 are not a true reflection of the standards the school achieves. The school has been making steady improvements in standards. By Year 6 in the 2000 test, the school did better than similar schools in English and mathematics, and as well as expected in science. All predictions for 2001 indicated that standards would be maintained. However, the school suffered a setback at the start of the spring term 2001 when both teachers in Year 6 were absent on extended leave. The managers did everything to minimise the disruption but in spite of this, pupils did not do as well as expected. The high proportion of pupils who needed extra help with their work (20 per cent) and the number of pupils – almost half the year group – who had moved schools during Years 3 to 6 were affected the most. The girls fared worse and their performance in mathematics and science depressed standards. The work seen in books and lessons during the inspection paints a more positive picture. Already in English and mathematics pupils are doing better than expected. They are doing as well as expected in science. All pupils across the year groups have good opportunities to write for different reasons, such as letters, instructions and accounts of present and past events. There is a strong emphasis on using lively and imaginative words, which reflects in the quality of pupils' writing across the year groups and adds interest for the reader. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils write clearly, they organise their work into paragraphs, punctuate correctly, and spell accurately. Average attaining pupils make good progress when redrafting their written work. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress because their handwriting improves and their sentences become more complex, but these pupils are not as accurate as their classmates in punctuating their work. In mathematics, there is good progress throughout the school and across all attainment groups. By Year 6, productivity is high and pupils have completed good quality work. Higher attaining pupils complete mathematical investigations competently. All pupils are learning methods for quick calculation, such as rounding to the nearest ten and then adjusting. Average and lower attaining pupils are becoming confident in using these methods to solve problems. Girls are not always as outgoing or as ready to answer questions as boys are in numeracy lessons.

By Year 2, pupils make good progress and when standards are compared with all schools and those with pupils from similar backgrounds, they are above average in reading and mathematics; in writing standards are well above average. From the below average attainment when children start nursery, they make good progress, and by the end of the reception year standards are as expected.

The school sets realistic targets for standards based upon the effective assessments of pupils' achievements.

² The areas of learning in the Foundation Stage are communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent – the pupils have a thirst for knowledge, concentrate extremely well in lessons and thoroughly enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent – whether in class, on the playground or moving around the school, pupils' behaviour is exemplary.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent – pupils work and play together constructively; their excellent relationships with each other contribute to the high level of harmony in school.
Attendance	Very good – the attendance rate is well above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence is very low.

Pupils take on responsibility extremely well. They willingly run, for example, the school tuck shop and the school council is an active group that works hard on behalf of the pupils in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very 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.

Teaching is very good because teachers and support staff have an excellent understanding of the subjects they teach and share what they know extremely well with pupils. The teaching of basic skills in literacy is excellent and very good in numeracy because teachers recognise the need for repetition and practice in the younger classes and the pace is quick and lively in the older year groups. This speeds learning and reflects in how well pupils use, for example, their writing and reading skills to help them learn in other subjects. Tasks link very well from whole-class teaching into the group activities so that learning is consolidated. This is because planning is most effective; it sets work at a demanding level for pupils of all attainments and allows pupils to be fully involved in their own learning. Pupils show extremely high levels of interest and concentrate very well because they find lessons exciting and this makes them eager to learn. Pupils behave exceptionally well, stay on task and work hard because teaching makes it very clear what is expected and rewards pupils with well-focused praise and encouragement. Teamwork is a strong element of the effective aspects of teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers and support staff challenge those that can do well, guide those who need help from time to time, and give aid to those who need extra help to keep up with their classmates. Pupils' response to adults reciprocates the way they are treated and from the youngest children in the nursery through to Year 6, pupils' learning is enhanced by the positive relationships all staff make with them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good – from the Foundation Stage through to Year 6 the school offers a wide and varied range of learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good – support for these pupils is targeted well in lessons and they make good progress as a result.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good – the nursery provides a warm and welcoming environment and staff provide well-focused support not only for the child but also for parents.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Excellent – the school nurtures in pupils a high level of self-awareness. This builds self-esteem, gives pupils a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and helps pupils to develop effective working relationships.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good – there are outstanding arrangements to check how well individual pupils are doing. The use of this information could be improved to check how well boys are doing as opposed to girls and vice versa in literacy, numeracy and science.

The school's strategy for literacy is excellent and gives pupils a broad range of reading and writing experiences across the year groups.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent – the headteacher has built a team of committed and extremely hardworking staff. They ensure that there is a consistent approach to teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent – the governors have a clear view of the challenges facing the school and act with the best interests of the pupils in mind.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good – there are extensive systems in place to check how well the school is doing; these identify effective targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good – funding is focused really well upon improving and supporting teaching and learning.

The budget carry-over will be reduced by half in the next financial year because of funding which will be used for building improvements and increased staffing levels. Governors carefully consider and seek the best value when making decisions upon spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teaching is good and the children are making good progress.• The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.• The way the school is led and managed.• The school is helping their children to become mature and sensible.	

The parental responses to the questionnaire and at the meeting for parents prior to the inspection show a very high level of confidence and satisfaction with the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Almost all pupils learn very well because teaching is very good.

1. Pupils do very well in almost all lessons because, throughout the school, teachers' planning is detailed, focused upon what different attainment groups will learn and based effectively on how well pupils have learned before. This ensures that the higher attaining pupils are challenged, the average attaining receive help from time to time with their work and pupils who need more regular help with their work receive it and learn quickly as result. From the time children start nursery, the staff encourage them to talk and put forward their ideas. This has a strong influence upon children's self-esteem and builds their confidence to express their ideas and ask for help when they need to. Children join in willingly in group activities and staff help them to understand what they are learning and why. Children, who find it difficult to sometimes understand explanations or who are not yet able to talk and understand English, are gently led to activities and shown how to use them. This is effective in fully involving children and speeds their learning.
2. Pupils produce good work and progress at a pace that allows them to either consolidate what they have learned or extend what they know and gain greater understanding. In both literacy and numeracy, those who teach the younger pupils recognise the need for repetition and practice and this is achieved successfully. For example, pupils in Year 2 were learning about how to read and interpret instructions and about how the sounds of letters alter when they are grouped in different ways. In the group work, pupils read and followed instructions to make a 'word wheel' containing the letter sounds they had learned about earlier. This set the learning within a purpose and, at the same time, the pupils had fun with what they were doing. Importantly, at the end of the lesson, pupils were able to explain what they had learned and why.
3. By the time pupils are in Year 6, they use their literacy skills successfully. A strong element of teaching writing throughout the school pays off in the older year groups because, by Year 6, pupils plan their writing carefully, produce good first attempts, refine and adapt their work and produce good quality, well-presented writing. Teachers share information clearly using the correct terms and giving explicit explanations to aid pupils' understanding. Pupils are often very eager to learn because the sharing of knowledge is done in a lively and fun way. For example, in Year 6, the teacher asks the pupils to help with planning a poem but then deliberately ignores their offers of help. Whilst this puzzles the pupils at first, it actually fires them up and they are 'itching' to put forward their ideas. The teacher sets about the planning in a systematic way and quickly the pupils recognise the pattern. When they come to plan their own poem based upon the seasons they use each of the senses in turn, for example, the smells of summer and the sights in winter, to develop their ideas successfully. During the group work no opportunity is missed to consolidate earlier understanding of metaphors, similes, alliteration and personification. Teachers use examples of pupils' work to encourage and inspire others and this helps pupils to think more deeply about what they are doing and to choose more lively and exciting words and phrases. By the end of the session, higher attaining pupils plan their work independently, phrases such as "snowmen patrol the front lawn", "honey pinchers" – to describe bees, and alliterations such as "waltzing wasps", are just a few of the examples given by both the higher and average attaining pupils. As in all classes, pupils who need extra help with their work benefit from the guidance of the learning support assistants. Staff encourage and help pupils successfully because questions are probing and, for example, support is given with writing when pupils are developing their ideas. This allows the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to be fully involved in the thinking, without being hampered by having to get their ideas down on paper. One pupil suggests a "pomander of scents"; he has remembered what a pomander is from his earlier work in history and used this well to develop his ideas in poetry.

4. In numeracy, from the very early stages in the nursery, children have many opportunities to explore number and shape and to learn by sorting and counting objects. By the time the children are in the reception year, they begin to add groups of objects together and gain an understanding of mathematical symbols such as the plus and equals signs. Staff provide a very good range of equipment to aid children's learning and their focused work with individuals and small groups means that children work at a good pace. Children relate well to each other and with adults because they are happy and secure in their learning. As in other year groups, their efforts are valued and this has a significant impact upon how hard they try with their work. Throughout the school, quick-fire mental sessions capture pupils' interest and prepare them well for group work. Teaching in Key Stage 1 and towards the end of Key Stage 2 has some very effective features. For example, throughout the lessons pupils are kept fully engrossed because questions encourage them to think and develop their ideas and try out new ways of solving problems. So when higher attaining pupils in Year 6, for example, work on area and perimeter they draw accurate scale drawings of the equipment to be fitted in a kitchen and bathroom plan. However, they realise, because of the questions posed, that the scale they have chosen needs adapting; their drawings are smaller than they would like and not easy for others to make use of. At the end of the lesson, further questioning, this time asking pupils what they found difficult, identifies for staff the things that pupils need further practice with, for example, for the lower attaining getting a firm grasp of their multiplication facts. Teachers use the checks made on how well pupils are doing as they work and at the end of lessons to plan what they will teach next. This is a significant contribution to the strengths in planning and in meeting the needs of different groups of pupils effectively.

The leadership of the headteacher and the management of senior staff and governors are outstanding.

5. The headteacher has built a very effective team of committed and hardworking teachers. There is a clear understanding of where the strengths in the school's work lie and the areas that need further improvement because of the extensive systems to evaluate teaching and learning. The headteacher and phase band managers³, who follow a programme of review and development, carry out this work; this provides the impetus for school improvement. An evaluation of this information is shared with all staff and governors, it is discussed and priorities are agreed for development; everyone knows what is expected of them and so there is a strong commitment to work hard and improve.
6. The range of assessments, testing and evaluations carried out are impressive. This provides targets not only for pupils to work towards but also for teachers. From the analysis of test results, close comparisons are made with other schools and those with pupils from a similar background. Any areas that appear weaker are fully investigated; for example, pupils did not cope as well with understanding and answering questions about what they had read. This led to more focused work in these areas, particularly in encouraging pupils to look beyond what is written to what the writer might be implying and to try to draw conclusions about why, for example, characters acted in a certain way.
7. The governors are most supportive and fully involved in the management of the school. They consider the funding of staffing wisely in light of the influence this has upon how well pupils are learning. They support the headteacher's organisation of classes into year groups, each with two teaching staff aided by at least one learning support assistant. They recognise that this allows the expertise and experience of teachers to be put to best use, and the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have effective and well-focused support. This also makes best use of the limited teaching space, particularly in the classes with the oldest pupils. The rise in standards since the last inspection and the much-improved standards in mathematics by Year 2 support this decision.

³ Teachers with responsibility for co-ordinating, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning across subjects and within year groups.

8. Whilst standards by Year 6 were disappointing in the tests in 2001, there are compelling reasons why. When teaching staff were absent for an extended period from January 2001, it left Year 6 without a teaching team. The headteacher and governors worked hard to minimise the disruption to pupils' learning. They reorganised teaching teams and took on supply cover and this limited the upset for pupils. Under the circumstances the school did everything it could. However, this was a group of pupils of which 20 per cent were on the special educational needs register and over half had had interruptions to their schooling during Years 3 to 6. These pupils, in particular the girls, were affected and did not do as well as expected in the science and mathematics tests. The standards in the tests in 2001 were an anomaly; already standards in the pupils' work in books and those seen in lessons are above average in English and mathematics and as expected in science; throughout the school, pupils make good progress.
9. The governors and staff work together effectively to provide a rich learning environment. They are a reflective group who are always seeking to improve what is on offer to the pupils. There is a strong emphasis upon giving children a flying start to their schooling and the provision of the children's centre is a high priority. The school was successful in its bid for lottery money to fund the setting-up and the continued use of the children's centre. The centre is an asset to the local community and in supporting parents in the early years of their child's upbringing. It is welcomed by parents and provides a springboard into the nursery. It shows the commitment of the governors and staff to the education of its future pupils and the high regard they have for the local community.

Pupils are very eager to learn and do well because the school fosters their personal development exceptionally well.

10. Children in the nursery and reception class and pupils in Years 1 to 6 like school very much because they are made to feel important and are fully involved in their own learning. This is because the school's methods for checking how well pupils are doing and teachers' marking show pupils what they need to do to improve further. This is not just in terms of their work but also to improve, for example, their concentration in lessons. Pupils respond to the targets set for them with enthusiasm because they realise that their hard work to improve will be recognised and rewarded. They strive hard to be noticed for doing good things and behave exceptionally well as a result. They are eager to learn because they find the activities in lessons, and the opportunities to take on responsibility, exciting; this fires their enthusiasm and captures their interest. This is evident in their lively talk and the way they concentrate on what they are doing.
11. The children in the nursery and reception class are friendly and chatty, and talk clearly about what they are doing and what they like best. This was particularly noticeable in the nursery when children were not only eager and confident to share their news but also listened very well to what others had to say. Staff listen to the children and set very good examples for them to copy because they treat them fairly and with respect. Children know how important it is to share, take turns and listen when asked; importantly, the staff make sure that children understand why. Even at this early stage children are told what they are going to learn and why: this gives real purpose to the activity and prepares them well. So when children first talk about babies it sets the scene for the follow-up story. Because the teacher reads with expression the children follow every word with wide-eyed wonder. This feature of teaching is evident in other year groups where teachers are adept at capturing pupils' imagination and interest.
12. Throughout school, pupils build exceptionally well upon these positive aspects of learning because staff continue to expect high standards of behaviour and value pupils' efforts. This develops the excellent relationships between the staff and pupils and is a real asset to teaching and learning. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 listen very well; this helps them to tackle activities confidently and get started quickly because they know what is expected of them. They recognise the achievements of others and there is a genuine pleasure when their

classmates do well. For example, at the end of a literacy lesson the teacher chooses a pupil who has done particularly well and who has “worked to the best of their ability”. Pupils know what this means, “it is someone who has tried very hard and done their best.” In addition, they offer their own thoughts such as, “ he listened very hard when sitting on the carpet.” For this child, this was his special target for the week and his classmates noticed how well he had done. This builds pupils' self-esteem and makes them confident in their interactions with others and develops in them the strength to have a go.

13. By the time pupils move into the junior classes they are self-reliant and able to organise themselves and they co-operate very well. This shows in the way, for example, the pupils run the tuck shop, serve customers, total the day's takings and keep simple accounts. Pupils take their jobs very seriously. The school has embraced the teaching of citizenship and this is developing awareness in pupils of life beyond school. Pupils learn that responsibility is earned not given because, for example, to be on the school council pupils must write and apply, setting out the reasons why they think they are suitable candidates. The council gives further insight into how decisions are made and how the views of others should be considered and weighed up to resolve what is best for the majority. This level of work develops pupils' personal skills exceptionally well. The school is a happy place and lessons run smoothly because pupils want to do well, they have a thirst for knowledge, they concentrate and work hard and, as a result, learning is often very effective and pupils' achievement over time is good.
14. On the playground, pupils play together effectively and the excellent relationships between pupils ensure that play remains friendly and fun. The way that the playground is segmented into special areas, such as the games and quiet zones, allows the pupils to make best use of the limited space. It ensures, for example, that those who want to be involved in boisterous play can do so safely without detracting from the enjoyment of others around them. Pupils of all ages willingly play together and older pupils make a good job of looking out for the younger children. The exemplary behaviour on the playground is also evident in lessons and around the school. Pupils are aware of the impact of their actions on others because this is a strong feature of the school's work. They work equally as well in groups as in whole-class lessons because they are fully aware of how to behave and of the rules for a happy and hardworking classroom environment. They work and act independently of adult support, for example, setting up the break time arrangements for the tuck shop and working in the studio on ICT tasks. This reflects the high level of maturity the older pupils show in and around the school when they move from classrooms to the hall or out onto the playground.

The school is at the heart of the community; relationships with parents are excellent.

15. There is a very strong focus upon involving the community in the life of the school. The headteacher firmly believes that citizenship skills and values are very important aspects of the pupils' education. These skills and values prepare them to play an active role as citizens and help develop good relationships with, and respect for, the differences between people of all ages and backgrounds. This is no more strongly evident than when the oldest pupils work with a group of adults who have learning difficulties. The pupils work with the adults on improving their skills in writing and in the early skills of reading. This gives pupils clear insight into the differing needs of others. It develops in them the care and patience to work with others and to respect the differences that make up the society in which they live. Pupils also meet with older citizens from the local history group. Some are grandparents of pupils attending the school and fondly remember their time as pupils at Mount Pleasant. The opportunity to talk with people who came to the school, for example during the war years, provides the pupils with valuable chances to find out about life in the past. The older citizens are given a warm welcome and their high profile in the school means that pupils often recognise them at other times. This is very important to them and makes them feel part of the school community.
16. For a number of years the staff and governors have built up the involvement of the community in helping the pupils in school. This help is valued and supports the personal and academic development of the pupils extremely well. The school also puts value back in the community;

for example, presently one member of staff is training adults to be 'reading buddies'. This work is linked to the local community college and so whilst some of this training will benefit the pupils at Mount Pleasant, other local schools will also receive help. This work is particularly helpful in promoting literacy skills and providing good role models for children who have no one to listen to them read at home.

17. Pupils are learning how to become helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their neighbourhood because of the work, for example of the school council. They are learning about the structure of councils and sub-committees and making links with the local council. This is developing an understanding of how decisions are made and the principles that underpin living in a democracy. This work overlaps into literacy when pupils write an invitation to the Mayor because they wish to know more about his roles and responsibilities. The planning for citizenship links with different subjects of the curriculum effectively and so, for example, pupils develop art and design skills well, decorating pots to be sold to raise funds to enhance the outdoor area.
18. The school's interest in the community is reciprocated and the Home and School Association raise between three and four thousand pounds each year. Fund-raising events are supported well; the school uses the funds wisely to buy new resources and maintain the upkeep of the minibus. There are also effective links with the secondary school, particularly in promoting arts such as dance and drama but also in helping older pupils at the time of transfer from Mount Pleasant to the next stage of their education.
19. The school has the confidence of parents and they are extremely pleased with the way it is led and managed and the progress their children are making. Parents know that their children will be very well cared for and will do well during their time at Mount Pleasant. They are very pleased with how well their children are learning and how the school is preparing them for later life. They are confident that their children get an effective start to their school life because of the work of the children's centre and the very high quality teaching in the nursery and the reception class. This fosters very good working relationships between home and school. This reflects, as children move through the school, in the way that most parents regularly hear their children read and ensure that homework is completed. Parents recognise that the work children are asked to do at home is meaningful and helps to build upon what has been learned in school so their children improve and do even better.
20. Parents recognise that the school wants the best for their children. They value the way staff encourage good behaviour and the way their children are encouraged to be involved in their own learning. They find the targets set for the children useful and this helps them to support their learning at home. The values that parents hold important are supported and promoted extremely well in the way staff encourage pupils to care for others, for example on afternoons when the oldest pupils work with adults with learning difficulties and help younger pupils in the school.

The school provides a rich and exciting range of activities for children from three to eleven years.

21. From the very early stages the school offers a rich and varied curriculum for children. This provision starts as early as possible in the children's centre with some of the youngest children being less than two years of age. The activities on offer give children the chance to mould and explore the textures, for example, of paint and dough and find out about how sounds are made. They develop their language through singing simple rhymes. A small charge is made to help fund the children's centre and parents feel it is excellent value for money. Already the school is developing a love of books by encouraging children to take a book home to share with their parents. The school is providing an important pre-school provision, as there are no local playgroups in the area.

22. Children progress from the under twos group to the next stage which is the group for children who are two and half years up to three years of age and then to the pre-nursery group. The abundance of wheeled vehicles allows children to develop strength in their arms and legs, and playing in the space outdoors helps them to begin to understand how to be aware of others. The good opportunities for them, to listen to stories and learn rhymes to increase their use of words and to help with counting, prepare the children well for their time in nursery.
23. Throughout the Foundation Stage, the curriculum for children is organised very well and activities have clear purpose and value. The children are introduced to many experiences that help them to develop their understanding of the wider world. Walks at different times of the year allow children to notice the changes in nature and in the weather. These opportunities help to develop their natural curiosity. Teaching ensures that activities are interesting and exciting and some of these cover aspects of the multicultural society in which we live. For example, children celebrate Christian and participate in Hindu festivals, such as Christmas and Diwali, the Festival of Light. American, Caribbean, Indian and French Days help children to understand how people in other countries live, the types of foods eaten, styles of music and ways of dressing. This develops their awareness of how other cultures enrich and enliven our lives.
24. Throughout the school, the activities on offer are rich and exciting and pupils are often inspired by the tasks they are expected to complete. As for the younger children, activities have clear purpose, and useful links between subjects make the learning more meaningful. For example, the historical work about castles is developed further when pupils in Year 2 design and draw their own castle. Pupils' understanding of historical terms and the design of castles as a defence are put to good use in this activity. The designs are then transferred to a drawing program on the computer. Pupils refine their work and, at the same time, gain a greater understanding of how to use the drawing tools. In addition, they become more skilful in using the mouse to direct the cursor on the screen. Pupils' historical, artistic and computer skills develop well as a result.
25. The promotion of citizenship also enriches the curriculum for the oldest pupils. It not only gives them the chance to become involved in their neighbourhood but is also a very effective means of developing pupils' skills in other subjects. For example, they use e-mail to contact local groups for further information. With the help of a local college, they have developed an Internet site giving information about events in the school and details of the work being covered in classes. This includes pictures, diagrams and text that the pupils have developed, for example about life in Stuart times.
26. Artwork is of a high quality. Art and design plays an important part in developing pupils' understanding as well as developing their skills, for example in drawing and painting. Displays in classes and around the school illustrate and emphasise key information about castles, for example. The pupils' artwork and writing feature strongly. There is again clear purpose because skills are developed and refined in art and the bright and lively displays also celebrate the pupils' work in subjects such as history and English. Throughout the school, no opportunity is missed to link work, where relevant, to other subjects.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The use of assessments to identify any imbalance in how well girls are doing compared to boys and vice versa.

27. The arrangements for checking how well pupils are doing and tracking their progress are impressive and give clear information for where support should be focused. However, the way this information is assessed is based upon the evaluation of:
- individual pupils; and
 - pupils of differing attainments such as the higher attaining, average attaining and lower attaining pupils as well as those with special educational needs.

It is not used to check whether there is any imbalance in how well boys are doing compared to girls and vice versa. It is noticeable that the group of pupils that suffered the greatest because of the disruptions last year, was girls in mathematics and science. Further analysis of the school's own assessments show that, in the present Year 6, more girls are attaining at or below the expected level than boys in numeracy. In some numeracy lessons, girls were not as eager to answer as boys and expressed a preference for learning literacy as opposed to numeracy. Identifying why this is happening and taking action is necessary to raise standards further in numeracy and avoid any imbalance in the achievements of girls as opposed to boys. Generally, displays throughout the school have a stronger literacy flavour than numeracy and, in some classrooms, there are few examples of mathematical language being prominently highlighted for pupils to refer to as learning aids.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

28. In order to improve further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) improve the use of the information from assessments and tests to:
 - check how well girls are doing compared to boys and vice versa;
 - identify more quickly if one group is doing better or worse in subjects such as mathematics and science;
 - adapt or refine aspects of teaching or the curriculum to redress any imbalance in the attainments of boys and girls.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

15*

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

6

* It is worth noting that seven of these lessons were observations of a teaching team, which included two teachers and learning support assistants.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	4	4	3	0	0	0
Percentage	27	27	27	19	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than six percentage points.

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)	30	336
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	29

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	47

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0
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 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	21	30	51

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	20
	Girls	26	27	30
	Total	46	47	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (91)	92 (91)	98 (91)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	20
	Girls	27	29	30
	Total	47	49	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (91)	96 (89)	98 (93)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	20	24	44

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	11	15
	Girls	21	15	20
	Total	35	26	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (85)	59 (81)	80 (90)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	13	15
	Girls	22	20	22
	Total	36	33	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (87)	75 (81)	84 (92)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	363
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.2
Average class size	25.9

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	158.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28:1
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33
Number of pupils per FTE adult	14:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	731624
Total expenditure	689767
Expenditure per pupil	1925
Balance brought forward from previous year	30924
Balance carried forward to next year	72781

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	396
Number of questionnaires returned	104

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	30	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	64	34	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	45	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	45	7	1	1
The teaching is good.	63	37	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	43	2	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	37	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	26	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	61	36	2	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	68	32	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	32	1	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	28	11	0	10