

Montacute School

3 Canford Heath Road, Poole, BH17 9NG

Inspection dates 17–18 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good 2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Early years provision		Good 2
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is too variable. Teachers do not always use information about pupils' achievement and progress to set work which challenges the most able pupils. School systems for marking and feedback do not consistently help pupils improve their work. As a result, achievement requires improvement.
- Leaders do not rigorously check the quality of teaching and how well all pupils learn. They do not make the best use of the detailed information they collect about pupils' achievement and progress when evaluating teaching and learning.
- Some middle leaders are not effective in improving their subjects. They do not check in sufficient detail if their actions are improving teaching and learning.
- Teachers do not regularly plan opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and mathematics skills in a wide range of subjects.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Teaching does not always challenge the most able students. Not enough students achieve the highest level of qualifications of which they are capable.
- Governors rely too much on the information given to them by leaders, without checking its accuracy. They do not always check pupils' achievement and progress for themselves. They do not challenge senior leaders sufficiently to ensure improvements are made in teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has strong links with the local community and schools in other countries. This widens the range of learning experiences for pupils.
- Teachers of pupils with the most complex learning difficulties have a good understanding of their needs. They develop pupils' self-confidence and communication skills effectively.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together as a strong team. They are committed to ensuring that all children learn to be independent.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They settle into school life quickly and make good progress in their learning.
- The school provides a safe and caring learning environment. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. As a result, pupils behave well and are keen to learn.
- Parents value the support and care their children receive. They appreciate the good-quality daily communication between home and school.
- Effective use of therapies makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and development.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons, all of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, school leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, heard some pupils read and observed their behaviour at breaktimes, lunchtime and in a school assembly.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, pupils' books, teachers' planning, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safety. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plans were also scrutinised.
- The views of parents and carers were gained through 10 responses to the online Parent View survey, informal discussions with parents during the inspection and a meeting with a representative group of parents.
- The views of 36 staff who responded to the staff questionnaire were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Catherine Leahy, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Redpath

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Montacute School provides education for pupils who have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. The large majority of pupils have one or more additional needs, including autistic spectrum disorders, medical needs, sensory impairments and emotional, social and mental health difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. They attend from Poole, Dorset and Bournemouth local authority areas.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are both much lower than the national average.
- The school converted to academy status in October 2011. This school is not part of an academy trust. The school was judged to be outstanding at its most recent inspection in June 2010.
- The school is currently being rebuilt. The current school building will be vacated 2 April 2015 so that the school can move to the new building after the Easter break.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2013. The school has appointed five new leaders since this time.
- The school uses no alternative or off-site provision.
- Children in the early years provision attend full time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- **Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils achieve well and make good progress by:**
 - ensuring teachers use information about pupils' achievements to set work at the right level to challenge the most able pupils in the school
 - sharing the best practice in the school and other schools to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - establishing clear approaches to the teaching of English and mathematics which are consistently implemented by all teachers
 - ensuring the curriculum provides opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects.
- **Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring:**
 - leaders use information about pupils' progress more effectively to set challenging targets, especially for the most able pupils
 - middle leaders take greater responsibility for improving and checking the quality of teaching and achievement in their subjects
 - middle leaders receive the training they need to carry out their role effectively
 - leaders challenge the most able students in the sixth form to enable them to achieve the highest level of qualifications they are capable of
 - governors check and challenge the information they receive to hold leaders to account more robustly for improving the school.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders are not using information about the school's work in sufficient detail to fully evaluate its performance. When judging the quality of teaching, senior leaders do not take account of the full range of information they collect, such as progress information and on the quality of work in pupils' books. As a result, they have been slow to identify and tackle some underachievement; in particular, the achievement and progress of the most able pupils.
- The headteacher leads a dedicated team. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership team. The headteacher and governors are developing a new leadership structure to take account of new roles and responsibilities. Leaders have identified the right areas for improvement. However, it is too early to see the impact of their work on improving the performance of the school.
- The headteacher is managing the transition to the new school building very well. Disruption to pupils has been minimal. This has reduced several pupils' anxiety.
- Middle leaders have identified improvements needed in their subjects. However, they are not currently checking the impact their actions are having. For example, they do not have sufficient knowledge about pupils' achievement and progress to check that the work in pupils' books is challenging enough. This means that some pupils make better progress than others.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, pupils benefit from working with local artists and music specialists. The school provides many opportunities to experience life outside the classroom. Teachers plan frequent visits and trips to support learning. Older pupils visit their link schools in Austria and Germany, which broadens their understanding of other cultures and lifestyles. Leaders encourage all pupils to take part in these rich and exciting activities.
- Pupils like to be with each other and they have respect for each other's differences. They are made aware of different faiths and the cultural and religious diversity of Britain through the assemblies they attend and topics such as 'Africa'. They demonstrate tolerance towards each other and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, they learn about democracy through voting for their school council representative. Their most recent project involved designing the logo for the new school.
- The school works closely with parents and carers. This ensures pupils are well prepared to make decisions about their next stage of learning. The school provides work-related courses and experience in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, such as house-keeping, agriculture and working in hospitality. Teachers have developed strong links and partnerships with the community and local businesses. Pupils benefit by making more informed decisions about their transition arrangements and career choices. They move on to appropriate placements.
- Leaders have strengthened procedures to manage staff performance. Staff targets are linked to the standards expected of teachers. This is having a positive impact on improving teaching.
- The school uses pupil premium funding to support pupils' personal development through specialist therapies. A specialist behaviour analyst also provides support for some pupils. As a result, pupils' self-confidence is improving. Incidents of challenging behaviour are reducing for individual pupils.
- The school uses the sports funding successfully to improve provision for physical education. For example, pupils attend trampolining. This enables them to experience new sports activities and improve on their current level of skills. They also have access to a safe environment where they enjoy freedom and learn to cooperate together.
- The school's outreach leader has developed strong links with local schools. As a result, pupils regularly visit and experience learning in a mainstream school. Students from the local secondary school work alongside pupils at Montacute. This enriches their understanding of pupils with disabilities. This partnership fosters positive relationships between young people in Poole, prevents discrimination and promotes awareness of equalities issues.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and meet statutory requirements. The school is a safe and secure place and parents express great confidence in how school leaders look after and protect their children.
- The local authority has not provided support for the school since it converted to academy status. However, the school chooses to buy in some services from the local authority, such as personnel services. These suitably support the school in its work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are closely involved with the school and visit regularly. They have a good understanding of the school's main areas for improvement. However, they do not have accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding of the achievement and progress of groups of pupils, particularly the most able.

- The headteacher keeps governors well informed about the work of the school. They receive regular reports from subject leaders about how they are developing their subjects. Governors increasingly ask challenging questions to hold leaders to account. They have a reasonable understanding of the quality of teaching. However, they rely too much on information given to them by the headteacher, without checking its reliability and accuracy. This is limiting the effectiveness of their work.
- Governors know how pupil premium and sports funding is being spent. They check it is having a positive impact on pupils' progress and personal development.
- The governing body manages the school budget well. They oversee the process used to hold teachers and the headteacher to account and link teachers' salary progression to performance.
- Governors carry out their safeguarding duties with great care and attention. They are vigilant in ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good. Teachers are well trained and skilled in managing anxious behaviour when this occurs. As a result, there is a calm and positive atmosphere and attendance is good. Attendance is above the national average when absences for medical needs have been taken into account.
- Pupils enjoy each other's company and are polite to adults and visitors. Upper school pupils spoke very positively about their school. 'I like it here. I like being with my friends.' Pupils arrive in the morning settled and ready to start the day. They start the day on time, ready to learn.
- Pupils behave well during break and lunchtimes, despite the constraints placed on available space during the building works. Pupils cooperate well together. They enjoy animated discussions over lunch and join in with the games and activities set out by the staff on the playground. This builds their self-confidence and communication skills effectively.
- The school develops pupils' personal and organisational skills through a range of planned activities. Pupils show visitors around the school and prepare and serve snacks at breaktimes. Adults expect pupils to put away their own equipment and take responsibility for their possessions where appropriate.
- Parents and staff report that behaviour is good at this school. Inspectors agree with this view. However, in a very small minority of lessons, pupils lose focus when work is not challenging enough. Therefore behaviour is not outstanding.
- Leaders keep records of behaviour incidents as they occur. Leaders are tightening procedures further to strengthen this aspect of their work. This enables them to analyse whether individual pupils are improving their behaviour in greater depth.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- A new school building is currently being built on site. However, staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe and secure at this time. Leaders ensure they are visible at the start and end of the day to welcome pupils. They check that pupils enter and leave the building safely.
- In discussions, pupils say there is no bullying. The school's records confirm this view. Staff ensure pupils are taught to keep safe on the internet. Older pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. For example, one sixth form student explained how to use social media sites safely.
- Leaders ensure robust procedures are in place to keep pupils safe in this school. Individual pupil files contain an appropriate range of information to help staff keep them safe. This includes specific eating plans and strategies to manage challenging behaviour. Staff who lead therapy sessions and administer medicines have received appropriate training.
- Key policies are in place, including those for intimate care and management of behaviour. All staff have received appropriate child protection training. Staff and governors carry out detailed risk assessments for school trips and activities. This ensures pupils are safe when out of school in the community.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is too variable. Teachers do not always use the information

gathered about pupils to plan work at the right level. As a result, teachers do not consistently challenge the most able pupils to learn more.

- The headteacher has recently introduced a consistent approach to marking and giving feedback to pupils. However, this practice is underdeveloped. Teachers use verbal feedback appropriately to encourage pupils to develop their thinking and understanding. However, they have not agreed on how to use written feedback to set out pupils' next steps of learning. Consequently, the most able pupils do not always know how to improve their work. This slows their learning.
- Approaches to teaching English and mathematics are underdeveloped and not implemented consistently across the school. Teachers do not always plan learning opportunities in other subjects to help pupils develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills. As a result, the most able pupils, in particular, do not make sufficient gains in their learning.
- Teachers generally use praise and encouragement to get the best out of pupils. For example, staff made learning fun while encouraging all pupils to take part in a movement therapy session. This creates a positive climate for learning, enabling pupils to develop their physical skills effectively.
- Teachers use practical experiences effectively to promote learning. For example, pupils visited their local shops with a visual shopping list to choose ingredients for a meal. On their return, they discussed how to make their meal using pictures, signing and communication aids. This enabled pupils to communicate effectively and develop greater independence and self-confidence.
- The staff team, including therapists, use their understanding of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to plan work at the right level. They plan targets for improvement in small, achievable steps. They check on their progress and keep careful records. This is having a positive impact on developing pupils' communication skills and all areas of their learning and development.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together as an effective team. Adults give the right amount of help to make sure pupils do as much as possible for themselves. As a result, they become less reliant on other people as they get older. Occasionally the pace of learning slows when pupils wait for their turn in lessons. At these times, pupils lose concentration and make less progress than they could.
- Teachers do not effectively share the best practice which already exists within the school. They are planning further work in other schools to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teachers and therapists work closely with families. They provide training in the use of communication strategies and first aid for families to use at home. Parents greatly appreciate this support and expertise. It helps them support their child's learning at home and at school.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Given their starting points, pupils' progress is too variable. Post-16 pupils gain qualifications in externally accredited examinations in a range of subjects by the time they leave the school. However, they are not currently offered courses which challenge and stretch the most able pupils. This is limiting pupils' achievements and restricting their choices after leaving school.
- Writing and mathematics skills are underdeveloped across the school. Work in pupils' books, particularly those of the most able, show limited opportunities to practise these skills across a range of subjects. Leaders have yet to agree on their approaches and expectations for teaching these subjects. As a result, pupils are not achieving as well as they could.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and those with the most complex needs, make better progress than their classmates. Teachers set challenging targets and frequently check and record small steps of progress. Good teaching and a focus on developing pupils' communication skills ensure these pupils achieve well.
- Pupils make strong gains in developing independent living skills through the work they do in the community. Pupils regularly visit shops and their forest school area. Several pupils have successfully completed Duke of Edinburgh awards. This helps them develop self-confidence and personal and social skills.
- The school's focus on developing pupils' communication skills is effective. Pupils learn to make choices and express their views using a range of communication aids; for example pictures, symbols and information technology devices. Some more able pupils can read and communicate without the need of pictures or symbols provided by teachers. However, they are not being stretched to read for themselves.
- Achievement in mathematics and English has been weak, especially for the most able pupils. In response, the school has introduced a phonics programme to improve skills in reading and writing. More able pupils in the lower and middle school read fluently to inspectors during the inspection. They are able to use their

developing phonic knowledge to read the words in their chosen books. However, teachers do not always use pupils' literacy skills in other subjects, which slows their progress. Pupils with more complex needs use their skills in practical situations, such as to read signs when out in the community.

- Specialist therapy sessions, for example speech and language and movement therapy, make a very positive contribution to developing pupils' communication skills and self-esteem. This helps pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, learn more effectively in their other lessons.
- Pupils make good gains in their personal and social development. Teaching assistants are skilled in supporting pupils so they learn to do things for themselves and become more independent.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium funding benefit from specialist music therapy and sensory activities. These pupils are making similar progress to their peers, as confirmed by the school's records. In addition, staff report an increase in self-confidence as a result of taking part in these activities.

The early years provision

is good

- The quality of teaching and learning in the early years provision is good. The leader and her staff meticulously use information about children's achievements to plan their next steps of learning in great detail. These systems are stronger than in the rest of the school. The detailed 'learning journeys' and school assessment records show children make at least good progress from their starting points. This is particularly the case in their personal and social development, communication and physical development.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide a calm, caring and nurturing learning environment. They develop strong relationships with parents and families through 'stay and play' sessions where parents join in the learning activities. They also share detailed records of their child's achievements. As a result, parents have confidence in the setting and children settle quickly. Children are happy and enjoy being in school. One parent stated, 'My child couldn't wait to come to school today.'
- The early years provision is well led and managed. Staff ensure children are kept safe. They place a high priority on meeting children's education, health and welfare needs. Children feel confident to explore the range of learning activities planned for them. This makes a positive contribution to developing their independence and communication skills. However, the outdoor provision is less well developed, limiting opportunities to learn. The school recognises this. However they have been impeded this year due to the constraints placed on them by the building works. The school has plans in place to develop this area on the new school site.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan interesting and engaging lessons to motivate and engage children in their learning. For example, teachers used sensory equipment and resources to build children's confidence. This improves their engagement and motivation to learn.
- Adults manage children's behaviour consistently and sensitively. They encourage children to be independent and make their own choices. This prepares them well to move into Year 1.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The school has recently appointed a leader for the sixth form. She has many promising ideas to develop provision further. However, the impact of these planned improvements is yet to be seen. The sixth form provision requires improvement because the challenge for the most able students is not high enough.
- Leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching and learning results in good achievement. Evidence in students' books confirms a lack of writing and mathematics work, particularly by the most able students. These students are not making as much progress as they should.
- Students follow a range of externally accredited examinations, such as independent living skills, vocational skills and leisure courses. These are suitable topics for most students. However, there are currently no opportunities for the most able students to aim for even the lower grades in GCSE examinations. The school's information shows some students are capable of achieving at this level. This is limiting their choices for the next stage of their education, training or work-related placements.
- There is a strong focus on providing practical activities to develop students' independence skills. Students work at a local hotel to prepare them for the next stage in their life. The school ensures all students receive good guidance and support with transition arrangements. Teachers accompany them to college and work placements to help them become familiar with their future settings. As a result, the school is successful in enabling students to gain entry to the right college or work-related placements when they leave.
- Staff manage students with challenging behaviour in an appropriate manner. This ensures students learn

to make choices and remain calm when they become anxious. Students trust the adults who work with them. These strong relationships ensure students feel safe and secure and well prepared for the next stage of their life.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137286
Local authority	Poole
Inspection number	448149

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Henderson
Headteacher	Jill Owen
Date of previous school inspection	24-25 June 2010
Telephone number	01202693239
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