

Montacute School

3 Canford Heath Road, Poole, Dorset BH17 9NG

Inspection dates

27–28 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have successfully addressed the issues identified in the last inspection. All groups of pupils now make good progress.
- Strong monitoring systems enable leaders to maintain an accurate awareness of the quality of teaching and how well individual pupils are progressing. Effective action is taken quickly when improvements are needed.
- The curriculum has been strengthened. It is designed well to meet the specific special educational needs of all pupils.
- Pupil work towards achieving their own targets, based on a full assessment of current needs. Therapists and the school nurse support class staff to help pupils meet these targets.
- Good links exist with local schools. This enables pupils to work and play regularly alongside their mainstream peers and gives staff opportunities to train with other teachers.
- Over the last 18 months there has been a significant decrease in the frequency of challenging behaviour. This is because pupils learn to recognise how they are feeling and how to cope when they feel stressed.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They like their friends and the staff. Parents appreciate the support they get from the school, and the improvements they see their children making, socially, academically and in their emotional well-being.
- Governors have reviewed their roles and re-organised the way they operate. They play a valuable part in the running of the school. They regularly check that safeguarding procedures are effective.
- The early years is well managed. Children benefit from a carefully planned start to school which helps them quickly settle in and make progress.
- Post-16 students take part in a good range of studies which prepare them well for adulthood. However, students do not always get the same level of support as younger pupils, which can restrict their learning.
- The school's approach to assessment is not developed well enough to ensure that judgements for the most able pupils are always accurate.
- Leaders recognise the requirement to further develop the support of pupils' mental health needs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the accuracy of assessment for the most able pupils to ensure that they make the progress they are capable of.
- Improve the learning of post-16 students by extending the effective teaching used with younger pupils to older age groups.
- Continue to develop an effective approach to support pupils' mental well-being, and which helps staff and parents in caring for pupils who have both learning and mental health difficulties.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The strong leadership of the headteacher and her deputy has enabled the school to make good progress since the previous inspection. The strengthening of all leadership teams, including governors, means that there is now good capacity for maintaining the performance of the school and for future improvements.
- The use of robust systems for tracking progress ensures that senior leaders maintain an accurate picture of the school's work and can identify areas that require attention. However the school's approach to the assessment of the most able pupils is not as well developed as it is for other focus groups. As a result, leaders do not possess as clear an understanding of how well the most able pupils are doing compared to their peers in mainstream schools.
- Middle leaders lead and manage their departments well. They use their delegated responsibility to keep a close eye on the progress of pupils and identify any support that staff need. They value the work of the senior leadership team and work closely with them to provide a good range of training and development opportunities for both teachers and teaching assistants. Performance management arrangements contribute well to this. Links with local schools are also used to give staff additional training opportunities.
- The school has developed good links with a range of external agencies. For example, therapists work closely with the school's own specialist nursing team, and speech and language therapists. Much of this work is carried out in classrooms in order that staff can learn how to assist pupils with their development. This is a very effective approach.
- The school employs a behavioural analyst. She carefully monitors the behaviour difficulties of pupils and identifies what can be done to reduce them. This has led to a significant reduction of incidents of challenging behaviour over the past 18 months.
- The curriculum has been redesigned so that it addresses all aspects of pupils' education, including their education, health and care plans. It meets the needs of pupils very well. There is a good variety of learning which improves both pupils' academic and life skills.
- The wide range of experiences and activities run by the school contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils worked with professional actors in a recent staging of their own version of 'The Tempest' at a local theatre.
- The school's values are influenced by the United Nations' 'Convention on the Rights of the Child'. These rights are incorporated into lesson planning. This approach contributes well to helping pupils develop a positive attitude to living in modern Britain. The curriculum further supports pupils in how to keep themselves safe in a variety of real-life situations.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and appreciate what a difference it has made to their child's life. They value highly the care and support given by staff.

- A senior member of staff provides support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in other schools as part of an outreach service. She uses the relationships she builds with other schools to provide regular opportunities for Montacute pupils to work and play with mainstream peers. For example, two classes visit a local primary school each week to join in with sports and craft lessons.

Governance of the school

- Following an external review of its work the governing body has made changes to the way in which it organises itself. This has resulted in governors understanding their responsibilities more clearly, and in their more efficient use of time. They have also completed an audit to identify the additional skills they require and have been able to better match the right person to each leadership role. Further training is provided as and when required.
- Governors have worked hard to make sure that they have enough information from a variety of sources to provide a good level of challenge to leaders, in order to not just accept the information that is given to them. They regularly check safeguarding procedures. Governors routinely record their observations and often add challenging questions to this record. This is an effective way of maintaining a good level of scrutiny of the school's work.
- Governors employ a school improvement partner who has extensive experience in monitoring the effectiveness of special schools. She provides advice to both the governing body and school leaders, and makes judgements on the quality of the school's work. This supports governors' awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.
- Financial planning and management are good. This ensures that additional funds for the sport premium, Year 7 catch-up, special educational needs and pupil premium are spent effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures in place make sure that new staff and visitors pose no risk to pupils. All staff and governors receive regular training at an appropriate level to match the amount of responsibility they hold. This includes training for staff who may become involved in the physical restraint of pupils.
- Concerns about individual pupils are carefully recorded. The school uses the good links it has with other agencies to ensure a proper response to any concerns.
- Health and safety procedures are good. The local authority and the governing body complete regular audits to check levels of risk. The site manager completes a frequent check on all safety equipment. Any areas of unreasonable risk identified are quickly addressed. There are clear risk assessments in place for each class team. These support staff to know how to reduce the potential risks that pupils might face in a range of situations.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan interesting and engaging learning. Pupils enjoy practical activities, such as using syringes in a mathematics lesson to measure the volume of water, or scales to accurately measure how much pasta is needed. In an English lesson individual words were stuck onto building blocks. Pupils enjoyed putting blocks together to make nonsense sentences, which they read aloud.
- Learning is well matched to the needs of each pupil. Each has an individual learning plan, which identifies targets to work towards from each part of the curriculum. These targets also relate to the end of key stage outcomes which have been identified in pupils' education, health and care plans.
- The marking policy is consistently applied across the school. As a result, teachers carefully check and monitor the quality of learning and progress for each pupil.
- A variety of 'learning pathways' have been developed to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. For example, pupils with more profound and multiple learning disabilities use a multi-sensory approach. For example, in a music lesson in the middle school, pupils demonstrated a good level of engagement. Pupils were able to choose which instrument they wanted to play, and listened carefully to music made by others.
- Staff are very skilled at communicating with pupils. They show good understanding of all of the different approaches that are used, including signing, use of symbols and technology. By choosing the most suitable communication approach staff are able to provide a good level of support to assist pupils in their learning.
- English and mathematics are taught effectively, enabling pupils to make good progress. However, when helping pupils to read or spell unfamiliar words, some staff do not always use the correct sound pronunciation for letters. This hinders pupils' ability to learn methods to read or spell new words.
- There is some inconsistency in the amount and type of support given to pupils. Effective strategies used for younger pupils to enable them to produce work of a good standard and with little adult input are not always used with post-16 students. As a result some of them rely too much on adult support.
- The school has developed a new approach to assessing pupils' learning. This system works well for most pupils and enables teachers and leaders to monitor progress. However, the system does not allow for the achievement of the most able pupils who often produce work that is at a higher level than teachers expect. As a result, leaders do not have an accurate view of how well these pupils are progressing, or how their progress compares to that of other pupils nationally.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff understand the needs of individual pupils well. The curriculum develops pupils' physical

and emotional well-being well. The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to practise classroom-learned practical skills out in the community. This helps to build pupils' self-confidence.

- Pupils' individual targets are used well to help pupils stay focused on the main areas for their development. During lunch these are written on each pupil's place mat, which helps both pupils and staff remember them.
- Staff are well trained to help pupils develop an awareness of their own feelings and emotional states. Pupils carry key fobs around with them, which have pictures and words on them to remind them of the different feelings they might experience. The key fobs also have ideas of things to do when pupils start to feel stressed. This is an effective way for pupils to learn how to recognise and manage strong feelings.
- Pupils are helped to understand effective ways of communicating with others. They learn how to be aware of what messages their body movements can convey, and how to express themselves more clearly by controlling the tone and pitch of their voices.
- The school provides a good level of support to parents. This can be through individual work with a family, or by running training sessions. The school is very effective at linking parents to community services when they need further support. A dedicated member of staff helps to run a weekly session for pupils' siblings, or families with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which enables them to have a taster of what the school offers.
- Pupils with healthcare needs are well supported by school-based staff and the nursing team. Agreed care programmes are carefully followed by all staff. Medication is administered well to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils communicate that they like being at school and feel safe. The most able pupils told an inspector that they all had friends at school and that they liked the adults who worked there.
- The school has become aware of the value of further developing its work in supporting pupils' mental health needs. Leaders also recognise that staff and parents who care for pupils who have learning and mental health difficulties, require the right type of training and support. Leaders are in the early stages of developing this.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons and during social times pupils usually behave well. There is a calm atmosphere within the school.
- Staff use the positive relationships they have with pupils to help them make good choices. Pupils generally show positive attitudes towards their learning. In a lively whole-school music assembly pupils enjoyed joining in with singing and making movements for the song 'I am the music man'. Despite the high level of excitement shown by some pupils, all managed their own behaviour well.
- A traffic light system is used in classrooms which describes what each pupil's behaviour looks like when they are behaving well, or not so well. Behaviour support plans are put in place for pupils who have more challenging behaviour. Both of these approaches provide clear guidance to staff about how to support pupils in regaining control of their own behaviour, and to keep the pupil and others safe. School records indicate that

over the last 18 months there has been a significant reduction in the frequency of serious behaviour incidents.

- There are occasions when pupils present very challenging behaviour. This can require staff to physically intervene at times. Staff are properly trained to do this safely.
- Pupils are keen to come to school. Overall attendance is better than in special schools nationally. Those pupils who attend less frequently have a medical reason for this.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. Good teaching, based on accurate assessment, enables pupils to make good progress against their targets in communication, literacy, numeracy and personal development. All groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils, boys and girls, and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, make similar good rates of progress.
- Termly pupil progress meetings allow teachers to look closely at pupils' work. This ensures that senior staff regularly know how well pupils are progressing. Booster sessions are provided for pupils who are not doing as well as the school had planned for. These have a very positive impact and often result in accelerated rates of progress.
- Parents are very positive about the progress their children make at the school. One parent reported, 'My son has progressed so much and he now does things I never thought he would do.' Another said 'My daughter has made great progress here, and she is a happier child at home because of the social progress she has made.'
- Pupils make good progress in reading and writing. For example, a more able upper school pupil has recently improved from being able to spell short, simple words to now accurately spelling 'breakfast' and 'fridge'. She can also write four sentences independently with mostly accurate spelling and punctuation. The most able middle school pupils can work out how to read unfamiliar words such as 'box' and 'bed'. These pupils are confident to read short sentences of three-letter words aloud, which some can do accurately.
- Disadvantaged middle school pupils have learned how to subtract equivalent fractions, and can work out which of two objects is heavier. Another pupil in this class has learned to measure liquids accurately using millilitres.
- In swimming, lower school pupils are skilfully supported by their key worker teaching assistants to achieve their individual targets. The teacher provided good oversight throughout the lesson to ensure the best possible progress was made.
- Staff routinely record pupils' achievements during lessons, which clearly indicate the good progress that is made. They also note down 'wow' moments that are not directly linked to planned achievements. An upper school pupil had a 'wow' moment recorded when he clearly communicated understanding three different signs in the community.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years is well led. The leader has good oversight of the quality of work carried out in all lower school classes, and of the welfare and progress of children. Staff are well supported and trained. Regular team meetings ensure that there is a good level of communication between all class members.
- Good liaison by school staff with families and their previous placements helps children to make a good transition into the school. Parents of new children are invited to spend the first few days in school with their child, which really helps staff get to know the family and communicate with the child. As a result, children settle quickly into the school.
- Nursery and early years children are in the same groups as older lower school pupils. This effectively supports them to prepare for their next stage in school. Staff take great care to ensure that the right level of care and support is given to each child. Nursery and early years welfare requirements are met.
- The curriculum is well suited to the needs of each child. This supports children's academic learning and their personal development. The personal development of children is further supported by the regular involvement of multi-agency staff such as the physiotherapist and occupational therapist.
- Children learn how to sit sensibly at the table for a meal, and use cutlery to eat their food. Those who need it gain better control of their own bodies by taking part in regular movement sessions.
- Teachers' assessments and planned next steps are accurate. Children engage well in their work and make good progress in a range of activities. Behaviour is good.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders have a clear view of how the curriculum meets the needs of students, and how to improve this further. The upper school leader manages this part of the school well, and ensures that students are safe. Staff are well trained and supported.
- Students make good progress, and are well prepared for life after school. Students achieve a good range of accredited qualifications. The school is working with local colleges to create further opportunities. All 16- to 19-year-old students who left the school last summer went on to a suitable next placement.
- Students are well supported to make decisions about their options after leaving school. They take part in taster sessions to give them experience of different types of work or further education. Extended work experience can be arranged, for example in a local hotel, developing woodcraft skills, or working for a charity. Effective, impartial careers guidance is offered to all students.
- Teaching is good. Students enjoy their lessons and behave well. Teachers help students to extend their learning from previous lessons, and use questions skilfully to encourage students to think more deeply.

- Students do not always get the amount of support they need. In writing, some students are over-reliant on teaching staff to guide them individually through their work, which restricts the amount of progress they make. Also, staff do not consistently use the correct sounds when helping students work out how to write or read unfamiliar words. As a result, students do not learn effective strategies to be able to do this independently.
- A number of students gain a great deal by taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. They also enjoy being responsible members of the school council. These experiences make a positive contribution to students' personal development.

School details

Unique reference number	137286
Local authority	Poole
Inspection number	10033148

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Butterworth
Headteacher	Jill Owen
Telephone number	01202 693239
Website	www.montacute.poole.sch.uk
Email address	jill.owen@montacute.poole.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on their website.
- Montacute School provides education for pupils who have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils have one or more additional need, including autism spectrum disorders, medical needs, sensory impairments, and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, or an education, health and care plan.

- The school is an academy. It is not part of an academy trust. It moved into a new purpose-built building in 2015.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion who are disadvantaged is average. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school is organised into three departments. Nursery, early years and Years 1 to 3 pupils are in the lower school. Post-16 pupils, and Years 9–11 pupils are in the upper school. All other pupils are in the middle school.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school provides outreach support to pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities in local mainstream schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes. These observations were all carried out jointly with senior leaders. Pupils were observed reading as part of their lessons. An assembly and lunchtime were also observed. A number of pupils shared their views about the school.
- Time was spent looking at pupils' work with class teachers and senior leaders. An inspector spoke to the staff who were on the school bus.
- Meetings were held with parents, governors, senior leaders, teachers, and the parent partner. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents. These included information on the school's website, school policies, minutes from governing body meetings, pupil progress information, behaviour records, health and safety records, risk assessments, attendance information, safeguarding records and staff recruitment files.
- Responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. Inspectors also took into account views expressed in the survey completed by staff.

Inspection team

Andy Lole, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Deirdre Fitzpatrick

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017