

Inspection of a good school: Montacute School

3 Canford Heath Road, Poole, Dorset BH17 9NG

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Montacute School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff believe in the school's values and treat pupils with care. Relationships are mutually respectful. Pupils feel heard and listened to by staff. For example, pupils in the school's parliament have a strong voice in its leadership.

Leaders ensure the curriculum is broad and meets pupils' complex communication needs. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning. Much learning takes place outside of the classroom and pupils attend a range of trips and activities. For example, pupils follow the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, which has been adapted to make the award accessible to all. There are frequent visitors to the school from business, industry and the arts. These experiences support pupils' wider learning and develop their independence. Pupils benefit from a range of specialist facilities. These include play equipment, a hydrotherapy pool and a range of bespoke therapies.

Pupils behave well and respond positively to adults' high expectations. They are happy at school and enjoy attending. They feel safe and say that bullying happens rarely. If it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have created a well-planned and structured curriculum. It is broad, ambitious and takes account of pupils' special educational needs. Pupils are successfully prepared for their next steps. Teachers use pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans) well to inform their planning.

Staff teach the curriculum through a wide range of approaches. These include practical activities, sensory approaches and outdoor learning. Pupils enjoy their lessons and take part with enthusiasm. They have positive attitudes to learning and work hard. However, there are times when the choice of curriculum activity is not well matched to the aims of the lesson. Therefore, when this happens, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

The focus of the early years curriculum is on the development of language and communication. Staff carefully plan what they want pupils to learn. This is well supported by a whole-school approach to developing a love of reading. Leaders have placed the school library at the centre of the school. It is popular and well used. The teaching of phonics is delivered throughout the school. Pupils read books that are well matched to the sounds they know. Teachers read to pupils and story time is a regular feature of lessons. Parents receive guidance on how reading is taught. This helps them to successfully support their child's learning. Pupils make progress with their reading, and many are now competent readers.

The curriculum in the sixth form builds independence. It has a strong focus on preparation for the next stage of students' learning. Careers and vocational learning are a high priority. Leaders have introduced a wide range of examination courses, which are popular with students. Work experience is well established. Students receive regular and high-quality advice about potential future destinations. Students go on to be successful in these placements.

Through the personal development curriculum, pupils learn to be tolerant of others. Pupils say the school welcomes everyone. The impact of this is evident in pupils' positive behaviour and strong relationships with each other. Fundamental British values form a part of the curriculum for personal, social and health education. Pupils know and understand them.

Staff speak positively about the culture of the school. They feel leaders listen to them and carefully consider their workload. Many staff say how much they enjoy working at the school. They benefit from the well-organised professional development opportunities they receive.

Governors know the school well and have a clear vision for its future. They have high expectations of all staff. They have a wide range of skills and are very aware of their roles and responsibilities. They carry them out with diligence. As a result, leaders and staff are challenged and supported well to fulfil the school's vision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have well-developed systems to secure the safeguarding of pupils. The training of staff is well organised and valued by everyone. Staff know what to do if they have a concern and what to expect when they make a report. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive timely help.

Pupils trust the staff, know who to talk to if they have a concern and they feel listened to. Leaders and governors complete suitable checks on adults who apply to work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some occasions when the choice of activity is not well matched to the aims of the curriculum. When this happens, pupils do not deepen their learning as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum implementation is of a consistently high quality.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	137286
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10256792
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Steve Butterworth
Headteacher	Ginny Bellard
Website	www.montacute.poole.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 and 28 April 2017

Information about this school

- Montacute School is a special school for pupils with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties. Many pupils have more than one need, including autism spectrum disorders, medical needs, sensory impairments, and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan.
- The school moved into a new purpose-built building in 2015.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for its pupils.
- The school provides outreach support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in local mainstream schools.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, geography, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors met with curriculum leaders and looked more widely at documentation in other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors examined the school's arrangements for safeguarding by meeting with the designated lead for safeguarding. They also scrutinised policies, procedures and record-keeping and reviewed the safeguarding checks made on staff when they are recruited.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils around the school site and held meetings with boys, girls, and a mixed group of pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including policies and record-keeping for behaviour management, exclusions and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online inspection questionnaire, including the free-text comments.
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Inspection team

Malcolm Willis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Buckton

Ofsted Inspector

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