

Montacute School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113959
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	338269
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Goodchild

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Henderson
Headteacher	Andrew Mears
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. During the inspection, 13 lessons, seven teachers and a higher level teaching assistant were observed. The end-of-day assembly, a learning walk at the start of the day and an observation of transport arrangements were also carried out. The quality of the work of the school's specialism was explored. The school's assessment data on the current progress of pupils and students were analysed. Meetings about aspects of the school's work were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of Governors, the headteacher, and staff with leadership and management responsibilities. The school improvement plan, the school improvement partner's reports and other documentation related to the work of the school were scrutinised. Inspectors looked at 38 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and also questionnaires completed by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether the school had maintained its momentum of improvement since the previous inspection and was still outstanding
- the accuracy of the school's judgements in its self-evaluation form.

Information about the school

Montacute is a special school catering for the needs of pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties, complex needs and autistic spectrum disorder. The school is now accepting children into its early years provision from the age of three and those with more complex medical and learning difficulties. In 2006, it gained specialist status for cognition and learning and has expanded its outreach programme since the previous inspection. It also provides support to other schools by sharing its expertise in the management of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and challenging behaviour. Virtually all pupils are from a White British background and their first language is English.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Montacute is still an outstanding school and has moved on significantly since its last inspection. It is committed to continuing the development of effective working partnerships beyond the school and is currently negotiating amalgamation with two other special schools as part of a new-build project. Future planning to meet the increasingly complex medical and learning needs of its pupils is excellent, and staff have received appropriate training to raise their skills. However, space is limited within the school and the resources are currently too restricted to meet all these complex needs. An increasing number of mainstream schools are benefitting from the high quality outreach programme in cognition and learning and the school has also become a centre of excellence for advice and support for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and for managing challenging behaviour. Inclusion is at the centre of the school's work and pupils benefit from regular integration activities with their mainstream peers that are beneficial to both groups. Pupils from Montacute are given the opportunity to model their work, play and behaviour alongside their peers whilst at the same time mainstream pupils gain an understanding of pupils with disabilities. Friendships develop that extend beyond the school. Through this work, the status of people within the community with disabilities has been significantly raised.

The school is a safe and welcoming environment and behaviour and relationships are excellent. It is evident that pupils really enjoy coming to school and the activities provided. From starting school, they make excellent progress in their learning. Recently introduced progress tracking systems give the school a clear picture of whether pupils are reaching the challenging targets the school has set. The majority of pupils by the end of both Year 11 and post-16 have exceeded the targets set and are achieving more highly than suggested by the national data the school benchmarks itself against. The overall quality of teaching is excellent and is evidence of the high quality continuing professional development provided by the school. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and make a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. Pupils receive a high standard of care and, through effective guidance, are well prepared for moves through the school and at the end of their time in post-16 education. The curriculum is based on key and life skills and is tailored well to meet the needs of individual pupils and students. This year, five post-16 students have been successful in gaining Gold Duke of Edinburgh Awards and are going to St James's Palace for their presentation.

The headteacher's creative and innovative approach to driving the school forward is evident in its outcomes. There is exceptionally strong teamwork both within the school and with the governing body and trustees. Links with families are excellent and provision to support them is extended beyond the school day. The recent building of

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cabins in the school's grounds so families have a safe space to play and stay for the day is just one example. Self-evaluation of its work is regular and rigorous and an accurate reflection of inspection findings. The school's track record amply demonstrates its excellent capacity to continuing improving.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that physical resources are available to meet the increasingly complex needs of pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

All groups of pupils achieve highly over their time in school. They enjoy their learning and take pleasure in their successes. Younger pupils, for example, were enjoying the sensory painting activity of the sea, using their hands and feet so much that it had to be repeated. This collaborative activity contributed well towards the development of their social skills. Parents and carers commented that the school is a happy place. Snack time is used well across the school to develop social interchange and the making of choices. As pupils move up through the school, they make significant progress in developing their communication skills, with most being able to make choices and make their wishes known to staff. Pupils of all ages said they felt safe and secure and able to communicate any feelings or concerns to staff. Based on their excellent relationships with staff, pupils are treated as young adults as they become more mature.

Pupils have a strong awareness of healthy lifestyles and benefit from a range of activities such as sailing, golf and orienteering that give them skills for their future lives. There is good use of circle time to raise pupils' awareness of others, and during the inspection it became evident that the support pupils give to each other both inside and outside lessons is a strength. They take pleasure in and celebrate each other's achievements. There is an active school council which has its own budget and pupils make purchasing decisions and prioritise spending. Links with a newly built school in Nottingham are giving pupils an insight into their future involvement with the building of the new school. An awareness of the local community is actively promoted and pupils recently took part in clearing heath land, tree planting and conservation work. The highlight of the year for many pupils and students was the 'Twinkle' musical extravaganza that pupils performed at the Lighthouse Theatre with other local schools. They also produced a piece of dance drama for the production. Pupils gain a good understanding about the different ethnic and cultural groups within the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are well qualified to meet the range of personal and learning needs of pupils. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of pupils and this enables them to plan lessons that ensure that pupils make at least good, and often outstanding, progress. Good emphasis is placed in all lessons on the development of pupils' communication and social skills. Teaching assistants are a valued and integral part of the classroom team. In the majority of lessons seen during the inspection, time was used very well and there was clarity about what pupils were expected to learn by the end of the lesson. In a small minority of lessons, the pace of learning slowed for some pupils through repetition of an already mastered skill.

All pupils benefit from a highly coherent and relevant curriculum. The curriculum provides memorable experiences, especially through inclusion opportunities, involving both cultural and leisure activities. There are strong and numerous partnerships that enrich the curriculum. All of these provide high quality learning and personal development opportunities. Personal, social and health education underpins provision to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe and lead healthy lifestyles. Cross-curricular provision is well embedded and there are excellent opportunities for pupils to reinforce their communication, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.

The medical and welfare provision for pupils is outstanding. On-site medical support, and excellent links with parents, carers, a range of health professionals and support agencies, ensure that pupils' needs are well met. Pupils are always treated with respect and their dignity retained at all times. The school employs two speech and language

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therapists, an assistant and a technical coordinator to support pupils and their families with the use of communication aids. Mixed age classes ensure that pupils are ready for transition into an older age group when they are ready. Pupils and their parents or carers are given good guidance before moving into the post-16 provision. Staff are well qualified to manage instances of challenging behaviour and are supported by well-judged individual behaviour plans which are reviewed on a regular basis.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership of the school is continually striving to improve the quality of provision not only for pupils and students within the school but also for its outreach work. A parent commented that 'the headteacher is knowledgeable, approachable and highly inspirational' and the majority felt it is a superb school in all aspects. Supported superbly well by the governing body and trustees, the school has an ambitious programme for future developments. This involves improving the already high quality partnerships it has with other schools, support agencies and health professionals so the school is even more effective in meeting its pupils' range of need. Support for parents and carers is a high priority, as shown by the appointment of a family support worker to improve the facilitator role the school already undertakes between them and the various agencies. The governing body have set up a limited company to provide short respite breaks for families. Since taking up post two years ago, the headteacher has introduced a distributed leadership model, with all staff being held accountable for the quality of their work. This has been effective in releasing the senior team to drive through the agenda of further improvements already identified. Provision for safeguarding all pupils is excellent and all staff are fully conversant with their duty of care. Leaders are highly effective in tackling discrimination and ensure equal opportunity for all its pupils. An example of this was enabling a pupil who was unable to ride a horse undertake a carriage ride in order to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and another to camp in a tent by using a mobile sling. Specific funds are used to ensure that activities are open to all. Provision for community cohesion is outstanding. The socioeconomic, religious and ethnic backgrounds of pupils are known and respected and, within its context, through planned visits and the curriculum, it does all it can to raise pupils' awareness of societies and cultures within the United Kingdom different from their own.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the school from three years of age, part-time at first until they are comfortable and secure enough to attend full-time. They are at an early stage of their development. Children are now starting school with more complex learning and medical needs than previous cohorts. The best use is made of the available facilities to meet their needs. Links with parents and carers are established early through home visits and meetings with the various agencies supporting the child. Children soon settle into the warm learning environment and start to respond to other children over a period of time. A great emphasis is placed on giving children a means of communication, and the speech and language team work with both staff and home so there is a consistency of approach. Consequently, incidents of challenging behaviour decrease as children become less frustrated. Social skills are promoted well through morning and end-of-day sessions where children are helped to recognise each other and respond to their name. Symbols are used for the timetable of activities shared with pupils at the start of sessions, which includes basic hygiene in the form of washing hands before food. A range of toys for children to choose from is available during their free play time. All children have the opportunity to go horse riding and swimming.

Assessment through observations is regular and progress recorded against key skills that are based on the Early Years Foundation Stage Development Matters. The progress children make is variable and related to their level of disability but most children make outstanding progress in their development during their time in this class. Teaching and support staff are experienced in dealing with children of this age and planning ensures

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that children gain some independence and control over what they do wherever possible. Good use is made of the local environment such as the shops and the park to enrich learning but also to start to raise children's awareness of the risks associated with being outside their home and school environment.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

The majority of students transfer into the sixth form at the end of Year 11. They are a testimony to all the hard work that has gone into their education during their time at the school. Their achievement is excellent. They are confident, independent and mature young adults who manage their behaviour and social relationships extremely well. They are excellent role models within school and the local community. The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities and experiences and students take full advantage of these. All students achieve an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) award at a level appropriate to them. For those students who are able to go into further education, there is good preparation to make sure they have the relevant skills and qualifications to enable them to access the courses. Work experience opportunities are sought where appropriate both in school and the local community. Students have the opportunity to practise their vocational skills, for example by working at a sailing centre on administrative tasks in return for sailing lessons or vouchers for other activities. A travel training programme increases students' confidence and ability to stay safe when using public transport and this has resulted in a student being able to attend a local college independently. The Team Enterprise company, Kann-Do 4 U, has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection. Students are now involved in an increased range of enterprises, such as jewellery making, where they learn new skills that could help to support them in their future lives. Leadership is excellent and the staff team has a good understanding of the needs of students and the issues surrounding them. The curriculum is constantly evolving to ensure that their changing needs are met.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Half of the parents and carers of pupils registered at the school responded to the questionnaire and nearly all were very happy with their child's experience at school. They think their children are safe and enjoy school and that the school is well led and managed. They said that teaching is good and pupils are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. The inspection team agreed with their comments. A very small number expressed concerns about their child's enjoyment of school, the progress they were making and the effectiveness of the school in meeting their needs. These concerns were not borne out by inspection evidence.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Montacute School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 78 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	76	6	16	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	76	8	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	76	5	13	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	61	11	29	1	3	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	32	84	3	8	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	68	8	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	79	5	13	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	63	8	21	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	74	5	13	1	3	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	71	9	24	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	79	5	13	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	74	8	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	79	4	11	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 June 2010

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Montacute School, Poole, BH17 9NG

I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently and for talking to us about your school and your work.

We found that your school is really great at helping you to learn and taking care of you. All the staff work hard thinking of new ways to make your school even better for you. It is great that the school council is also really good at helping the school to become a better place. We thought your learning was excellent and we liked the way the older children showed the younger ones how to learn and behave well. When you are out of school you show other people how well you behave.

You told us that you feel safe and enjoy coming to school. You know who to tell if you have a problem or worry. Some of you took part in the Twinkle production and said it was one of your favourite things. You also liked mixing with pupils from other schools, which is another part of the school's work we thought was great.

We have identified an improvement to help to make your school an even better place in the future.

- we noticed that the school does need some big changes to make the building better so that you, and the new children joining your school, can continue to benefit from the high standard of care you already receive and continue to learn really well.

Well done for everything that you do so well and I wish you good luck for your future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Goodchild

Lead Inspector

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