

Medina House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118228
Local Authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	312853
Inspection dates	13 - 14 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Mrs Jacque Cook

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

Type of School	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Clark
Headteacher	Mr Robin Goodfellow
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	School Lane Newport PO30 2HS
Telephone number	01983 522917
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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a school for 64 pupils with severe (SLD), profound (PMLD) or complex learning difficulties. Almost a half of the pupils are either diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) or they have associated needs. An increasing number have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD). The nature of the learners' difficulties means they are working below national expectations. There are more than three times as many boys as girls. Six children are at the Foundation Stage. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage. There are five looked after or vulnerable pupils. One class, which includes a Year 9 and a Year 6 pupil, is currently located off-site. Already ten pupils have joined the school since the usual entry date. Last year an additional 20 pupils were admitted during the year.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Medina House is an effective school where pupils thoroughly enjoy their education. Parents comment that their children flourish and want to come to school. The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior leadership team are good. They are skilled in helping staff to gain expertise and strategies to manage pupils with a very wide range of learning needs. As a result, although pupils often start school with very low levels of attainment, they make good progress and achieve well, particularly in learning to communicate. Teachers are particularly good at using appropriate strategies to help pupils learn successfully. Additional means of communication are used very well so that those with little or no speech can make their needs and wants known. Clear routines and structures help pupils with ASD to have the security to enable them to attempt tasks. Pupils' personal development is good. Good teaching ensures that they take regular exercise and try to eat well. They develop an understanding of how to keep safe and contribute well to both the school and the wider community by helping others and fundraising. Through developing skills such as using information and communication technology (ICT) and learning to work with others they are preparing well to succeed in life beyond school.

Last year classes were reorganised to group pupils according to their needs. In many respects, this has been very successful. This has worked very well for pupils with PMLD who are taught a specially designed curriculum. One of these pupils is now ready to work with her peers in another class. A group of pupils that transferred late in their primary education from mainstream schools settled quickly together. They are now beginning to achieve standards that are closer to the national expectation. There are strengths in the activities that enrich and broaden what is taught. However, because many classes now have pupils from more than one year group and a large number of pupils join the school during the year, there is not clear planning to show continuity of learning from one year to the next.

The staff provide high standards of care for the pupils and safeguarding procedures are robust. There are good procedures to help pupils with behavioural difficulties to conform and learn well. The school's outreach service is valued by those that use it.

The headteacher has successfully built a team of hardworking and committed staff in the school. They are prepared to take on new challenges. For instance, an additional class for a Year 9 and a Year 6 pupil has been established and staffed. This is highly effective. The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate. There is a great deal of data collected about the attainment and the progress made by pupils, however, this is not adequately analysed or used to set targets in each subject. Many of the governors are new and recently changed procedures have not yet been put into effect. Although governance is currently not as effective as it should be, the strong leadership of the headteacher has maintained a clear direction for the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

At the beginning of the academic year, provision was made for the two children joining the school at the Foundation Stage in classes that met their individual needs. These children are making good progress and developing their social and communication skills effectively. Recently, four additional children have been admitted and they are taught well with other slightly older pupils. Good attention to teaching language helps them to begin to name parts of the face and to identify colours accurately. Although their individual needs are being met, activities do not take sufficient account of the Foundation Stage curriculum because they have too few opportunities for structured play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure children at the Foundation Stage have more opportunities for structured play.
- Analyse data and use the results to inform target setting for pupils' learning in each subject.
- Improve the governance of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make consistently good progress in improving their communication skills. This is because staff use and teach a range of additional communication strategies well. Pupils with PMLD use pictures and objects to make choices. Those with ASD learn to build sentences and develop their speech. All pupils make good progress in improving their personal, social and health education and citizenship because this is taught regularly throughout the curriculum as well as in separate sessions. There is no measurable difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils and girls do as well as boys. Close attention to the social and emotional needs of vulnerable pupils ensures they do as well as their peers. Pupils, who join the school during the school year, quickly begin to make the progress they should. Any behaviour difficulties are dealt with and as behaviour improves so their progress increases. A few that transferred from mainstream school are already working at lower National Curriculum levels. Although targets are not set to measure pupils' achievement in each subject, on the whole, pupils make good progress towards meeting challenging targets on individual education plans. However, some of these targets are too difficult to achieve in the suggested timescales.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy school and as a result, their attendance is good and they have positive attitudes in lessons. They behave well and learn to be considerate of each other. Reminders from staff help them to remember to say please and thank you. Pupils undertake jobs such as taking the register and helping to clear up. Recently one class raised money for charity through the sale of cakes. Older pupils represent younger pupils on the school council and use their clear understanding of 'what is good for you' to support their requests for improvements. They proudly showed the new water dispenser that they had asked for and talked about the need to 'keep fit'. All pupils adopt a healthy lifestyle and learn to look after themselves as far as they are able. They routinely clean their teeth after they have eaten and know whom to go to if they have a problem both in and out of school. Their effective use of basic skills and life skills increases their independence and contributes to their developing economic well-being. Children at the Foundation Stage begin to develop ICT skills drawing faces using touch screens or a mouse. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Since the last inspection, pupils are more aware of the range of beliefs and lifestyles in the world. They have made dream catchers like Native Americans and talk excitedly about the home life of a recent African visitor to the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff use their expertise well to meet the individual needs of the pupils in their classes. They ensure that appropriate methods are used including signing, symbols and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to enable pupils' communication to be developed. Well-structured routines such as using schedules and working in special areas enable pupils with ASD to learn successfully. Strategies, such as counting back from five to give time for compliance, are applied consistently and pupils thrive and learn effectively. Praise and encouragement successfully aids pupils' concentration and ensures that they persist when they find tasks difficult. Lessons are planned well making good use of the skilled support staff. Very good practical activities such as providing shoes, scissors and keys for pupils to test to establish what is magnetic, capture and maintain their interest. Work is matched appropriately to pupils' abilities but learning objectives are occasionally what pupils will do rather than what they will learn. In these instances, assessment of progress made during the lesson is not sharp enough. Generally, the pace of lessons is brisk which maintains pupils' interest. When, despite this, whole class sessions last too long a few pupils become restless.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is rightly being reviewed in the light of the impact of changes made last year. The clear small steps and sensory focus of the 'developmental' curriculum used for pupils with PMLD structures their learning well. This gives them a firm basis to build on when they join other classes for lessons. The topic cycles for Years 5 and 6 are robust and prepare them well for their secondary education. However, in other parts of the school continuity from one year to the next is not secure for all pupils. This is due to the range of age groups in each class and the need to restructure classes at least annually. Sometimes, because of the large number of pupils that join during the year, pupils may be moved in order to get the 'best fit' for learning needs. The needs of the youngest children are generally well met but they do not have enough opportunities to learn through structured play activities. Throughout the school, the curriculum is enriched through activities such as horse riding and swimming and visits into the community and to the mainland. Pupils enjoy the after school activities that include sports, cooking and art.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school works effectively with multi-disciplinary teams. Attendance is good and has been improved through establishing clear procedures and linking with the education welfare service. Vulnerable children are monitored carefully using strategies such as 'the team around the child' where all agencies involved meet to ensure they work together productively. These arrangements contribute to the high regard the school has to keeping the pupils safe. Clear strategies are used where necessary to help pupils improve their behaviour. Advice from support services such as educational psychologists is followed effectively. Reward systems work well. Pupils say they like getting stickers and awards during the weekly celebration assembly.

A comprehensive assessment system is completed regularly by staff, which ensures they keep track of pupils' attainment. Many pupils are able to understand what they need to do to improve because staff re-write targets from individual education plans using simple language.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Improvement of the school is directed effectively and since the last inspection there have been several innovations that have helped pupils to do well. These demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to improve further. Good use is made of support staff to assist subject leaders and the school is successfully working with the wider community forming productive links with local schools. To enable pupils to transfer as smoothly as possible, staff go with pupils and teach them in their secondary school. Teachers lead effective teams in their classrooms. Their good management ensures that consistently high expectations are set that pupils strive to meet. Regular monitoring and a well-focused training schedule contribute to staff expertise and the good quality of teaching and learning. Through introducing and establishing a recording system for pupils' attainment it is now easy for staff to be sure that progress is being made. However, because challenging targets for improvement for pupils' progress in each subject are not set, it is difficult for senior staff to monitor whether pupils are achieving well. Data such as the number of targets achieved on individual education plans is not analysed early enough to take any remedial action. The special class is monitored well to ensure there has been an improvement in the pupils' formally very difficult behaviour. As a result, they are now making good progress in their lessons.

Community cohesion is promoted well through effective links with support agencies and with parents who are very involved in the school. Parents attend training sessions, meet monthly and have representatives on the healthy schools group. Last September many of the governors changed. Only recently have new procedures been agreed and meanwhile governance has been ineffective. As one governor commented, 'we have built the foundations, but not yet started on the walls.' The strong leadership of the headteacher has made sure that the disruption to governance has not affected the work of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness in the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

03 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Medina House School, Newport, PO30 2HS

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited recently. I enjoyed coming to your lessons, looking at your work and talking to you. A big thank you goes to the pupils in class 9 who talked with me. You were very helpful and told me what you liked about your school.

This is what I liked about your school:

- You clearly enjoy your lessons and make good progress.
- Your staff are good at helping you to learn.
- You try hard to eat healthy food and keep fit.
- Those of you that join the school from other schools settle quickly and make good progress.
- Staff look after you well in school and are good at helping you to look after yourselves.
- You behave well.
- Your headteacher and senior staff run the school well.

This is what I have asked your school to do now:

- Make sure that the youngest pupils learn more through playing.
- Look more carefully at your progress and set targets for improvement.
- Ensure the governors help the school as well as they should.

With best wishes

Jacque Cook
Lead Inspector

