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Mrs Julie Stewart
Headteacher
Medina House School
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Dear Mrs Stewart

Short inspection of Medina House School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 2018 with Christine Bulmer, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead a committed team of staff who have built upon the strengths that inspectors previously noted. They share your energy and passion for pupils' learning and achievement. Your school motto, 'Be the best that you can be', is a driving force for the school community. It helps pupils to try hard with their learning and inspires staff to develop their professional expertise. Parents and carers recognise the determined way that you care about their children's success. They strongly support you and your staff and are delighted by the progress that they see their children make. Typical of many parents who spoke to inspectors was one who said, 'My child has progressed more than I could have hoped, with teachers making the most of abilities rather than looking at the disabilities.'

When the school was last inspected, inspectors asked you to make sure that pupils make the best possible progress in every lesson by using learning time well. Leaders have tackled this recommendation successfully by developing all of the current staff's skills so that they carefully match teaching and learning activities to each pupil's needs. Your school has grown in size since the previous inspection, resulting in a larger team of staff. You encourage each of them to develop their professional expertise. Teachers access regular and specific training, both in school and with other special schools. Senior leaders provide effective training for teachers and support staff, for example by helping new class teachers to understand how to plan the very small steps in learning that are appropriate to each pupil. All staff are proud to work at the school and positive about the many ways in which leaders are always on hand with advice and challenge. Teachers welcome the opportunities to

share their professional learning with colleagues and are enthusiastic to implement new approaches. Although subject leaders are well placed to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subject area, you are aware that they do not currently have enough opportunity to work with you to evaluate whole-school performance information. You plan to address this by extending the roles, responsibilities and influence of leaders at different levels of the school.

You are relentless in your drive to ensure that every pupil, including a high proportion without verbal skills, will transfer into secondary school with an effective means of communication. Through the consistent use of picture exchange, assistive technology or signing, all pupils learn to communicate their feelings and needs. The school's relentless emphasis on communication means that pupils develop these skills throughout the day, including at breaktimes when adults work skilfully to engage pupils in purposeful activity and interaction with each other. Staff do not miss any opportunity that helps to develop pupils' confidence. Parents told me how successfully pupils learn what happens at school on each day of the week because their children wear a different coloured T-shirt. This simple means of communication helps pupils to express their thoughts and ideas. Many parents use the same idea to help provide a structure for weekends and holidays.

You hold regular meetings with teachers to ensure that pupils are doing as well as they can to reach the challenging targets that you jointly set. Most pupils make strong academic gains in reading, with their learning in phonics clearly linked to letter formation and writing. By the time the most able transfer to secondary school, they can read and write a series of sentences with increasing fluency and independence, for example to make a diary entry. Pupils learn to recognise numbers and shapes well, which helps them to tackle some challenging mathematical ideas. In the school's Year 5 and Year 6 'core' class, we saw how well pupils were able to read coordinates on the island maps they had designed.

Governors know the school well and have a visible presence, which staff appreciate. The governing body has a strong sense of its responsibilities and carefully reviews leaders' progress with the agreed development priorities. Governors share your high aspirations for pupils. Consequently, they challenge you and your leaders effectively, helping the school to improve. Governors are as enthusiastic as you are for the school to be a hub of expertise for mainstream schools on the Isle of Wight by equipping their teachers to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils' behaviour continues to be a strength of the school. They concentrate hard on the tasks that teachers give them. Teachers make lessons fun, engaging pupils' senses using sound, touch and movement. Sometimes, a pupil's behaviour can be challenging. The staff's very thorough training helps them to understand that such behaviour communicates emotions and needs. They work skilfully to adapt difficult behaviour so that it becomes manageable and sociably acceptable. Staff are caring and kind, but they are also persistent and firm so as to maintain the school's high expectations.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, governors and all staff leave no stone unturned in their efforts to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Where concerns arise that a pupil is not protected from harm, you act swiftly and tenaciously. As the designated leader for safeguarding, you have ensured that all adults in school are well trained to keep pupils safe. Staff are aware that some pupils' needs make them particularly vulnerable. Where necessary, staff have a specific understanding of the safe management of pupils' individual care needs. School staff know each pupil exceptionally well, which supports trusting relationships that help pupils to communicate needs and anxieties. You also know each family well and this helps effective home-school collaboration. Daily contact ensures that even minor observations about changes in behaviour are noticed and shared.

The school places a high priority on pupils learning about how to keep safe and healthy relationships. Your staff have prepared a bespoke programme, 'Be Safe', in recognition that this is a priority for your pupils. Staff help pupils to learn about public and private places. Your office staff ensure that visitors know the rules that pupils expect regarding contact. 'Be Safe' also teaches pupils about keeping safe online. A group of pupils in Years 5 and 6 proudly showed me the posters that they had created about the safe use of technology and informed me of the sensible rules that they follow.

Pupils attend school well. Any unexplained absence is followed up early in the school day to ensure that the pupil is safe. Where pupils have severe medical needs, their regular attendance is helped by the on-site provision of therapies and clinics with visiting health professionals and effective health care plans.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, inspectors followed three linked lines of enquiry. First, we looked at how well leaders check on pupils' progress to ensure that their outcomes remain good. We reviewed how effectively teaching meets pupils' individual learning needs and, finally, we looked at how well the curriculum helps pupils to be interested in their learning and develop their skills.
- Leaders have developed well-established systems to check on pupils' achievements and you rigorously analyse the progress of individuals and groups. Teachers support this work by maintaining detailed daily records. Senior leaders have recently introduced additional systems to gather information about different areas of pupils' learning so that it is in one place, making it easier to share information about pupils' development. Teachers are positive about having a revised way to review pupils' progress because it means changes to provision can be even more timely.
- Your analysis of current pupils' achievements and the records of learning that inspectors reviewed show that a high proportion of pupils make at least good progress. There are no discernible differences for the different groups of pupils, such as for pupils who are disadvantaged, because the school meets all needs

based upon the most recent review of the education, health and care plan.

- Teachers plan learning by moving pupils on skilfully from what they already know and can do. Leaders have recently enhanced the approach for Nursery and Reception children to learn through activity and play, which continues into key stage 1. Adults lead learning well in these key stages, enabling children and pupils to develop a wide range of skills.
- In key stage 2, teachers manage their classroom support staff very precisely so that pupils engage with learning and have plenty of opportunities to communicate in class. Pupils' workbooks show that pupils develop their skills effectively in reading, writing and mathematics.
- For some pupils, such as those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, highly personalised learning pathways are in place. These are supported by teachers and other professionals, such as therapists. They identify detailed steps in learning progress, including improvements to mobility, communication and response to sensory stimuli. Pupils who follow an individual learning pathway participate in a full range of subject experiences, helping them to develop personal interests.
- Leaders have developed a rich and exciting curriculum offer. There is a broad range of opportunities and experiences across all subject areas to help pupils to develop life-long skills and a love of learning. The curriculum is enriched by many cultural and sporting opportunities, such as a weekly 'Forest School' session. There are also regular visits to the island's 'Beach School' and other local places of interest, and some that are further afield, such as a recent visit to Legoland. Many subjects are linked by topics that stimulate pupils' curiosity and provide a context for pupils to develop and practise key skills. There are minor inconsistencies for some key stage 2 pupils. On occasion, learning tasks in a few subjects are not well designed because they do not deepen pupils' understanding or skills.
- Pupils enjoy expressing themselves creatively, especially in art and music. They like the opportunities to develop hobbies on a Friday afternoon, particularly those with a sports focus, such as football, running and 'bike club'. They participate in events alongside pupils from mainstream schools in neighbouring counties, such as the recent Rock Challenge. These opportunities ensure that pupils and their parents are proud to be part of your vibrant school community.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- learning tasks in all subjects in key stage 2 are consistently well planned to enable every pupil to deepen their understanding and skills
- subject leaders' roles develop so they can contribute more widely to whole-school improvement priorities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the Isle of Wight. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Jacobs
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher and a mixed group of teaching staff. We visited almost all classes and groups with senior leaders in order to observe the quality of pupils' communication and learning, and their behaviour and safety. We saw pupils at lunch and at play and we spoke to pupils. We randomly selected some pupils to discuss their progress with leaders and we looked at their workbooks and/or records of achievement. Inspectors met two members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority. The views of parents were gathered in discussions at the school gate and through 42 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, with 28 accompanying free-text responses. Inspectors also considered 25 responses to the staff questionnaire. We analysed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, analyses of pupils' progress, the school's single central record of recruitment checks, and policies, procedures and record-keeping.