



Bradfields School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119043
LEA Medway
Inspection number 280446
Inspection dates 21 June 2006 to 22 June 2006
Reporting inspector Steven Parker AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Churchill Avenue
School category	Community		Chatham
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Kent ME5 0LB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 683990
Number on roll	223	Fax number	01634 683571
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Rita Menzies
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr Peter Harris

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 19	21 June 2006 - 22 June 2006	280446

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bradfields is a large, secondary, day special school that serves the whole Medway Authority, a mainly urban area. It educates pupils with moderate learning difficulties, many of whom have additional, increasingly complex needs. It also has a 44 place unit, Fieldview, which provides specialist support for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). There is a separate Further Education Centre (FEC), housed on a mainstream school site, some three miles away in the centre of Gillingham, which serves the needs of 55 pupils beyond 16. Learners are significantly underachieving when they arrive, and a high proportion come from socially and economically deprived backgrounds. 15 pupils are in the care of local authorities across south east England and there is a similar number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are twice as many boys as girls.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bradfields is a good school, where a very strong focus on the needs of the whole child helps pupils to make outstanding progress in their personal development. Pupils achieve some impressive results in examinations at 16, and those that go on to college or the FEC achieve continuing success in accredited courses. The headteacher has provided outstanding leadership and has motivated the whole staff team to develop and provide a good quality of education that meets the needs of all pupils effectively. Worthy of particular celebration is the exceptional Fieldview unit, which is highly valued by the local authority and parents alike. As one parent put it, 'my autistic son has made brilliant progress; he is now mature, confident and a joy to have around'. All staff across the school are ambitious for their pupils and provide good quality teaching and outstanding pastoral support. Consequently, pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress towards achieving challenging targets. Behaviour is excellent and pupils are very keen to get to school and participate in the relevant and engaging curriculum provided. Although the school has created a highly inclusive internal environment, there are too few opportunities for pupils to experience inclusion opportunities in mainstream schools. There have been very good improvements since the last inspection. The school has a clear picture of its strengths and areas for development, and inspectors are able to confirm the evaluation of its own performance. There are, however, some inadequacies in the way information, for example on the performance of different groups of pupils, is analysed and used to plan improvements. Governors provide outstanding support and rigorous challenge. They contribute significantly to the school's strong capacity to effect further improvements. Bradfields provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The FEC has been much improved since its reconstituted leadership team has worked collaboratively to improve the curriculum and teaching and learning. Consequently, its performance is now good overall. There are plans in place to increase students' inclusion in the main school's 14-19 curriculum. It is also recognised that there is a need for more frequent and better focused monitoring of teaching and learning to make standards consistent across all classes. The Centre has moved into much better accommodation, which has made a significant difference to its effectiveness.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a range of opportunities for pupils to spend time with their mainstream peers.
- Refine the gathering and analysis of information about all aspects of pupils' and the school's performance, and make better use of this in development planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Highly individualised planning across the school seeks to ensure that all pupils, no matter what their difficulties, achieve equally well, although the school cannot at the moment be totally secure about the performance of particular groups, such as looked after children. Many arrive with poor attitudes to learning, as a result of their earlier negative experience of school, and have correspondingly low aspirations. They are often transformed in a short time and go on to make often impressive gains to meet challenging targets. One parent wrote about her son that, 'within the space of months, he has become a different boy, both socially and academically. He is now much more confident and happier about himself'. The great majority of pupils make particularly good progress in developing their communication skills. This helps them to become more socially capable and, consequently, make good progress in all the subjects they study. Most achieve creditable results in examinations at 16, and a small number of higher attainers go on to study successfully at local further education colleges. Those pupils who stay on into the FEC continue to make good progress.

Pupils with autism in Fieldview make excellent progress in their ability to develop effective coping strategies and to benefit from the outstanding teaching they receive. All of them make very impressive progress in their learning and achieve very well, and some with particularly strong aptitudes in specific subjects attain national standards in them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in all aspects of their personal development. This is because of the excellent pastoral support that underpins the whole atmosphere of the school. In lessons and in the general life of the school, very good attention is paid to enabling pupils to be as independent as possible and to taking responsibility for their own learning and behaviour. Consequently, their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils enjoy school and are very appreciative of the experiences they have there. Attendance is good, often much better than in their previous schools.

All pupils make very good progress in self-help and independence skills. Older pupils say the school and FEC have given them confidence in themselves, and helped them to 'learn better'. Members of the school and student councils take their responsibilities very seriously and have a tangible influence on school life and the environment. They feel they are 'making a difference' both in school, and in the wider community through their fund raising work.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. A very strong culture of respect for others underpins all of the school's work. Pupils are encouraged to think of others' experiences and points of view and grow very well in their understanding of these and of different cultures. They are protective and supportive

of any friends who they see as vulnerable, and have a highly developed sense of justice and fair play.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and outstanding in the Fieldview unit, helping pupils to learn successfully right across the school. An important element of the school's success is the very effective partnerships between teachers with particular subject expertise and learning support assistants. Most of the latter work consistently in one area and develop their own strengths in the subjects they are supporting. Relationships with pupils are excellent and behaviour management is very effective. When combined with good, individualised planning, well presented materials and increasingly effective and imaginative use of information and communication technology (ICT), lessons are engaging and accessible to all pupils, so that none feel less well served than others. However, not all pupils know their learning targets or are involved in setting or evaluating their progress towards meeting them, and this is an area that could be further addressed. Assessment is thorough and, in most instances, informs the planning of lessons well. The school continues to develop this aspect of its work, most especially in relation to tracking the progress of specific groups of pupils to ensure that any differences in performance are identified and dealt with. Work is marked regularly and comments are helpful in directing pupils how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provided for all pupils is good overall, and specialist provision made for pupils with ASD is exceptional. All required subjects are taught and there has been a very good improvement in provision for information and communication technology (ICT), music and modern foreign languages since the last inspection. The range of courses which pupils can follow leading to qualifications has also been expanded.

Bradfields is a highly inclusive community. There are, however, inadequate opportunities for pupils to be included in mainstream settings, although there is a new, very successful sporting link with a nearby sports college, which both schools are committed to develop and extend. On the main school site there is also a very good range of additional activities, such as after school clubs, residential trips, including one to France, community visits, sporting, musical and practical activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, that provide strong enrichment of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy these tremendously. It is, though, unsatisfactory that pupils within the FEC have fewer opportunities for such clubs and indeed for informal outside leisure activities, because of the limitations of the site's recreational facilities.

Particularly good support for personal, social and health education and linked vocational courses helps pupils to stay healthy, keep safe and understand about being a

responsible citizen. The poor quality of school lunches does not, however, support the school's approach to encouraging healthy eating. Limited work experience arrangements for older pupils, including those in the FEC, reduce their chances to develop an understanding of the world of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is outstanding, and includes an excellent and highly effective pastoral focus. Pupils say they feel respected and safe in the school, and staff listen and help them to learn. An atmosphere of care, concern and mutual respect permeates all relationships within the school and this 'rubs off' on how pupils learn to deal with each other and the adults around them.

Child protection procedures are good, and arrangements for dealing with any incidents of bullying are effective. Pupils are confident that adults will sort out any problems and keep them safe and secure.

Bradfields' staff work very well with external agencies to ensure pupils have the resources and help they need. There are excellent relationships with local businesses, the Mid-Kent College and Connexions, that support pupils' transition to the next stage of their education and life very well indeed. Parents are extremely appreciative of the highly supportive partnerships that staff nurture with them, which often benefit the whole family.

Individual education plans are effective in identifying the most important things pupils have to learn. Staff give very good feedback to pupils in lessons about what is good about what they have done. This, plus the many opportunities that pupils have to talk through issues that they have personally, or with their work, mean that most pupils do understand their own needs and are very well 'set up' for later learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, and have established the strong teamwork that exists across the school. The headteacher has provided outstanding leadership and has been very well supported by his senior leadership colleagues who have applied their own expertise to developing particular aspects of the school. Together, they have in turn been successful in supporting and encouraging other colleagues to take on new management challenges. The growth and quality of the outstanding Fieldview unit and the significant improvements in the FEC are testament to the success of this approach. Other heads of department are being helped to further develop their own management skills. Teachers' work is monitored well by senior staff and helpful verbal and written feedback is always provided. Good training and professional development opportunities are planned on the basis of needs identified in this way.

Very effective budget management has ensured that the interiors of the main school buildings and the outside environment are maintained to very high standards, and

carefully accumulated funds will enable continuing improvements, for example, to the showers. Good self-evaluation processes are becoming well established and the views of parents, pupils and governors are regularly sought when planning future developments. There are, however, weaknesses in the school's approach to gathering and analysing information about some aspects of its work; for example, there is a need for more rigour in relation to evaluating information on the performance of different groups of

pupils. Governors provide outstanding support, and, because of their considerable knowledge of the workings of the school through, for example, tracking pupils through a typical day, they can question and challenge any assertions from school managers or the local authority with confidence. They are an important element of the school's strong capacity to continue improving.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when Ms Lewis and I visited recently. Special thanks must go to those of you on the councils for talking to us so confidently and for all the information you gave us. We too thought your school was good and there were many things we liked:

You all receive a good education and are cared for very well.

You enjoy coming to school, and are extremely well behaved and respectful of others.

Your teachers and support staff work very well together to make sure your lessons are interesting and enable you to achieve your best. This is particularly so for those of you who attend the excellent Fieldview centre.

You appreciate the wide range of things that you can do in school, including the after school clubs. Students in the further education centre miss some of these opportunities when they move there.

Your headteacher and all the staff do their best to make sure that your time in school is as good as it can be.

Your parents and carers really appreciate what the school does for you and them

You are well prepared for life after school.

We have asked the school to do the following things to make it even better:

Arrange opportunities for you to spend time with and work alongside pupils in mainstream schools.

Make good use of information about your learning to make Bradfields even better.

Yours sincerely

Steven Parker Lead inspector