

Brantridge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134063
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	296243
Inspection date	10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	6–13
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	37
Appropriate authority	The proprietor Lloyd Richards
Headteacher	Tamsin Gent
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002
School address	Staplefield Place Staplefield Haywards Heath RH17 6EQ
Telephone number	01444 400228
Fax number	01444 401083

Age group	6–13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

When the school was last inspected it was part of the London Borough of Greenwich's provision for pupils with special educational needs. The report commented that plans were well advanced for the local authority to release the school into a charitable trust. This took place in January 2003 when the school became part of the Grafham Grange Special Educational Trust. There was stable management of the school during this transition and subsequently until late in 2005. Early in 2006, a series of events occurred which had a significant adverse effect on senior leaders' ability to manage the school effectively. Subsequently, the headteacher left in June 2006 and there has been significant change since that time. Between then and March 2007 there were two acting headteachers and one substantive headteacher. In April 2007, the most recent acting headteacher took on the post in a substantive capacity.

Almost without exception the pupils are boarders as the school admits them from a very wide geographical area. The residential provision is inspected by inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI). The school specialises in working with pupils with social communication difficulties, including autism and/or challenging behaviour. They all have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils have a White British background. A very small minority of pupils are in public care.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Brantridge is a satisfactory but improving school that aims for its pupils to 'undergo personal and social development, remedy academic underachievement and improve self-image and self-esteem'. It is largely successful in achieving these aims, but its ability to be more effective has been hindered by significant upheaval at senior management level. This has disrupted the implementation of routine systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. However, the new headteacher, officers from the trust and governors have made a good start in developing strategic direction for the school. Leadership and management are now satisfactory and the improvements already made show that the school has the capacity to improve further.

The pupils' personal development is good. The staff work hard and successfully in establishing relationships with pupils, who respond positively. One pupil commented 'I feel safe. They're nice people.' As the pupils begin to trust and respect the adults who work with them they become more confident and mature. The pupils enjoy their learning. Some lessons are taught well but overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory. It provides a broad range of learning opportunities supported by a variety of enrichment activities although the chance to extend these further through links with other schools is at an early stage of development. There are good links with other partners such as parents and sponsoring local authorities.

The pupils' standard of work is exceptionally low in national terms because of their learning difficulties, but they make satisfactory progress from when they enter the school. Their ability to make more progress is limited currently by two factors. The planned taught week falls some way short of the recommended time for pupils of this age, and the school does not yet have in place rigorous procedures that enable staff to assess pupils' achievements accurately and track their progress as they move through the school. This reduces the teachers' ability to plan lessons most effectively and to give their pupils clear guidance about how they can improve the standard of their work. It also reduces managers' ability to identify patterns of underachievement and tackle them quickly. The school is a safe environment and overall the pupils receive satisfactory levels of care, guidance and support, although the quality of pastoral support is particularly high.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The residential units were visited by CSCI inspectors in November 2006. Their findings were positive. They judged that the school met all but one of the minimum care standards, which was almost met, and exceeded a minority of them. Inspectors concluded that the pupils were looked after well and that relationships were strong, the pupils were provided with a good range of activities and the units were well managed. The school has made a good start in working through its action plan to address the development areas that the inspectors identified.

The residential provision makes a good contribution to enhancing many aspects of the pupils' personal development. A range of visits, such as to the theatre to see *The Lion King*, and unit-based activities like cooking and the leavers' programme are both enjoyable and valuable

in extending the pupils' experiences. Some activities, such as listening to pupils read, contribute to building on what pupils have learned in the classroom but these are not always done in a structured way that has been planned with teachers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce a robust cycle of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work to drive school improvement.
- More efficiently track pupils' achievements, using the information to ensure that lessons are better planned to meet pupils' needs and give them guidance.
- Analyse assessment data so that any patterns of underachievement are quickly picked up.
- Reorganise the school timetable in order to increase the amount of planned taught time.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Prior to attending Brantridge, the majority of pupils have experienced difficulties in mainstream schools. Their challenging behaviour and social communication difficulties have frequently got in the way of learning. Consequently, when they join the school their standard of work is exceptionally low. A few pupils achieve well during their time in the school but generally the pupils make satisfactory progress.

The pupils become more enthusiastic learners as their attitudes and behaviour improve. The school has recently introduced new dimensions to its work that capitalise on this enthusiasm. It has adopted the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy and has introduced more planned provision to help pupils practise and develop these skills in all subjects. It has also introduced setting in English and mathematics for pupils in Years 7 and 8. The full impact of these developments is not yet evident. However, the early indication is that pupils are learning these skills more regularly and are applying them at a greater rate and in a wider context than previously.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The establishment of trusting relationships and a secure environment provide a solid basis from which the pupils flourish. Consequently, their self-worth improves and they become more positive young people. They behave well and have good attitudes to their work. They are courteous and polite to visitors and classmates alike. Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. The social and moral aspects are encouraged especially well but there are few planned opportunities for quiet reflection and other features of spirituality. The pupils are made aware of their own culture but the school could do more to promote the multicultural nature of modern Britain.

The pupils have a good understanding about staying safe, from knowing that they must not go into the park unsupervised to appreciating that they have to keep the door code a secret. They know that exercise and the right diet are important for staying healthy and that smoking and drugs are harmful. The pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school community but there are no planned and structured opportunities for them to take on additional responsibilities commensurate with their age. The school has already recognised that the establishment of a school council would be a good start. Pupils are adequately prepared for changing schools and then subsequently moving into work or continuing education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers and teaching assistants develop very good relationships with their pupils and manage their behaviour well. They have high expectations and use the school's BEAM (Behaviour/Effort/Attitude/Merit) system effectively to maintain the pupils' focus and to encourage them to become increasingly responsible for their own learning. Teaching assistants play an important role in working with pupils on a one-to-one basis. Lessons provide many opportunities to promote the pupils' personal development. For instance, pupils follow very well established routines and classroom protocols and teachers provide opportunities for them to learn in different situations, which could mean working independently or in a small group.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach and so they provide activities that are enjoyable and broadly match pupils' capabilities. However, these activities are not as focused as they could be in building on pupils' previous learning. This is because teachers' marking is of variable quality and planning does not acknowledge pupils' prior achievements when showing what individual pupils should learn in each lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is a good mix of learning opportunities that reflect the needs of all learners. There is a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication (ICT) and these subjects are supplemented well by areas of learning such as technology, the humanities and physical education. Pupils' class-based learning is supported well through the use of local facilities, such as the swimming pool, and by visits further afield. Links with local schools are limited to a few sporting events; there are not yet opportunities for pupils to work with and alongside local children on a regular basis.

Quite appropriately, personal, social and health education (PSHE) features strongly in the curriculum. While much of this takes place through a structured PSHE programme, such as the recent topic 'Being an active citizen', pupils spend time in too many unplanned situations that have only a loose connection to their personal development. The nature of the pupils' learning difficulties means that they do need to be settled down at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions, but these are excessively long. When this time is totalled and added to a relatively short day and sessions that are not linked to the formal curriculum, such as Friday afternoons, the result is a taught week that falls some way short of the recommended time. This reduces the opportunities available for pupils to consolidate their skills and to acquire new ones. This has an impact on the progress that they are able to make.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a caring and supportive environment. Pupils' welfare and well-being are always to the fore and the school has good procedures for safeguarding them at all times. Child protection procedures are secure, all staff are vetted in line with current requirements and appropriate risk assessments are carried out. Close liaison with a range of other colleagues is a particularly impressive feature. For instance, speech and language therapy and art therapy are provided for significant numbers of pupils and the family caseworker has an integral role

in maintaining very close links between school and pupils' parents or carers. The school provides high levels of individual pastoral support and guidance. The pupils confirm that there is always someone to whom they can turn, such as their focal worker in the residential units. In addition, the implementation of systems such as BEAM and the '5 Star' Scheme, which involves the pupils self-evaluating aspects of their personal development, contributes greatly to the quality of guidance and support provided.

The academic support and guidance that staff give to their pupils is less effective. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is of variable usefulness in helping the pupils to improve and teachers do not use assessment information effectively to set individual learning targets in lessons. Residential care staff provide some academic support to pupils but this is not always based on close formal liaison with teachers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are now stable, following a period when turbulence in the senior management structure adversely affected the school's evolution. This meant that while some initiatives were implemented well, such as the introduction of food technology and music into the curriculum and a focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects, other developments stalled. School improvement tended to stem from responses to events rather than being rooted in the outcomes of a rigorous cycle of self-audit. Assessment and tracking systems were not fully established. Therefore, senior leaders have not been in a position until recently to collate and analyse assessment data in order to monitor the progress made by individual pupils and groups of pupils or to use this information to bring about school improvement.

The situation is now improving as the headteacher, governors and trust representatives have adopted a more systematic approach to evaluating the school's work. These key personnel now have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done, and their findings are suitably focused on pupils' achievement. However, there has not yet been time for the impact of their work to become fully apparent and they are aware that there is much to be done to ensure that all pupils are making the best possible progress.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brantridge School, Stapleford, Hayward's Heath RH17 6EQ

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. It was a very interesting day as we were able to watch you in lessons, having lunch and at break times. We would like to say a particular thank you to the group of pupils who gave up some of their free time to speak with us.

Brantridge is a satisfactory school, where you make adequate progress. The boarding units are good. The staff take very good care of you and work very hard at helping you to develop as young people. You go to school regularly, generally behave well and have good attitudes to work. This means that you give yourselves every chance of learning. You understand a lot about being safe and staying healthy. You make good progress in becoming aware of the needs of others and know the difference between right and wrong. You have reasonable opportunities to help in school and to take on responsibilities, but the senior staff know that it would be a good idea to set up a school council.

There have been lots of headteachers in the last year and this means that the school has not changed as quickly as everyone would have wished. The new senior staff and governors have lots of ideas to get things moving again and we have given them some things to work on:

- The senior staff should make sure that they know exactly how well the school is doing and how they want it to develop in the future.
- Teachers need to use information about what you have already learned to make sure lessons teach you new things and give you guidance on how to improve.
- Senior teachers need a stronger system for checking in detail that every one of you is doing as well as you possibly can.
- The timetable needs to be reorganised so that you spend more time in lessons.

You can help by continuing to go to school regularly and behaving so well. Thank you once again and I wish you all luck in the future.

Mike Kell Lead inspector