

Bradstow School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101095
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	307581
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Charalambos Loizou

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Alex Turner HMI

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	6–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	51
Sixth form	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Joseph Murphy
Headteacher	Mr Bert Furze
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2005
School address	34 Dumpton Park Road Broadstairs CT10 1BY
Telephone number	01843 862123
Fax number	01843 866648

Age group	6–19
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Introduction

The inspection of the school was carried out by an Additional Inspector and the boarding provision was inspected by a Social Care Inspector.

Description of the school

Bradstow is a residential special school for boys and girls who have severe and profound learning or behavioural and communication difficulties, as well as pupils who have acute autistic spectrum disorder. Pupils are admitted from maintained special schools from a large number of different local authorities. The school provides highly specialised provision for pupils who are not able to attend special schools for a number of reasons, including permanent exclusion from other schools and severe learning, communication, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Nearly all pupils are boarders, and all have statements of their special educational needs. Currently, 21 students receive post-16 tertiary, vocational education and care provision that also includes on-site work related experience.

Nearly half of the pupils are of White British heritage, and the rest come from a range of other backgrounds and minority ethnic groups. A small proportion of pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language, although the nature of their specific needs means that the vast majority are unable to communicate orally in any language. The inspection of both education and boarding provisions was integrated. The school achieved specialist status in Communication and Interaction. It was awarded five star status as recognition of excellence by the European Foundation for Quality Management.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Bradstow is an outstanding school. The headteacher is right when he states that the school has 'a successful track record of working with challenging youngsters, because we understand them'. Pupils and their families benefit enormously from the high standard of care and education provided. All pupils, including students receiving post-16 education and care, achieve extremely well in their communication skills, personal development and behaviour. Many parents and carers have paid tribute to the commitment and dedication of the staff, one summing up the views of most by saying, 'I think they are miracle workers. They have transformed my child's life, and ours.' All national minimum standards are met in the school's boarding provision, which is also outstanding in its quality and effectiveness.

The pupils attend the school because they are unable to function in other special schools and because most are unable to communicate verbally or read and comprehend written words. All pupils are working at such extremely low levels because of their severe and profound learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. It is to the tremendous credit of a highly skilled and well-qualified team of teachers and support staff that they enable the pupils to overcome and cope with the substantial learning and emotional barriers that they face. The school is also successful in providing respite care for parents through its boarding provision. This is enhanced by the school's excellent relationships and communication with parents and carers. There are highly effective systems in place that enable parents, carers and support services to keep in touch with the pupils on a daily basis if requested.

Bradstow is a very complex organisation and a centre of excellence in its own field. It offers a lifeline to pupils and families, many of whom were on the brink of giving up hope that 'the system' was failing them. Another parent wrote: 'Staff at the school go out of their way to offer advice, support and reassurance to parents. My son has been a pupil at the school for six years and I have only ever witnessed quality interaction between all staff and pupils.' Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and senior management team, the school works on the fundamental principle that everyone 'looks at the world through the eyes of the child'. The two core foundational principles that underpin the school's success focus on improving pupils' communication skills, and their personal qualities and behaviour, so they can function as best as they can. Outstanding leadership, management and governance are sharply focused on continually developing and improving pupils' capabilities and skills. The leadership team is successful in continually striving to improve the quality of care, education and welfare provided in what is a highly inclusive community. In their own way, the pupils have expressed positive thoughts and feelings about their school through words, pictures and expressions that reflect their well-developed skills in signing.

The curriculum and the quality of teaching and support are exceptional. Teachers' planning is constantly under review so that learning is closely matched to the pupils' changing needs. Extended enrichment through the school's 24-hour curriculum provides a rich tapestry of activities and experiences for all pupils. The school's learning resource centre is one of many imaginative initiatives that aim to produce bespoke learning resources that are closely matched to the needs, ages and abilities of all pupils. This is a continuing process, with advanced plans to extend literacy and communication resources to all subjects of the curriculum. There is scope and potential to continue this so that all the work pupils do is supported by tailor-made communication resources. Currently, pupils have access to innovative transitional cue cards, individual learning logs and diaries, and specialised picture stories which help them to sequence

events. A highly skilled staff team are producing resources that enable the pupils to express their emotions and make sense of the feelings and expressions of others. For post-16 students, an impressive range of approaches to work-related learning includes practical and engaging activities such as horticulture and market gardening, and outdoor adventurous pursuits such as sailing. Pupils thrive on the opportunities to participate in drama and musical productions. They make greetings cards for distribution, which enables them to contribute to the school and wider communities. Post-16 students harvest vegetable produce and cook their own lunches, and so are gaining an excellent range of life skills that prepare them for the future. Web-based 'virtual education' and specialised interactive technology in all classes are used extremely effectively, reflecting excellent improvements to information and communication technology (ICT) since the school's last inspection. The headteacher inspires confidence in his staff team and his pupils, with ambitious plans continually being drawn up that push the boundaries of possibility for the pupils. What at first may have seemed impossible became a reality when the school put on a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed for parents, visitors and representatives of the local council in the beautiful setting of the school's outdoor theatre.

Performance management is robust, and the high-quality professional development of staff contributes greatly to the school's effectiveness and its excellent record for retaining and supporting staff through a wide range of accredited qualifications. The leadership teams in both the education and care provision, together with all staff and governors, are fully involved in accurate self-evaluation and review, and information is rigorously analysed to inform developments and improvements. The school's capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Post-16 education and care incorporate a wide range of vocational, tertiary and work-related learning. The students are unable to access a normal academic sixth-form curriculum because of their profound learning difficulties. However, they benefit from a stimulating range of indoor and outdoor activities and projects. The teaching is of high quality, being carefully planned and very well resourced. The success of post-16 education reflects the very high expectations of the leadership team and staff. These are underpinned by the school's overarching and highly specialised management systems and policies. Consequently, students are extremely well cared for, and there is an excellent focus on helping them to become more independent. The students enjoy their work and learn extremely well, for example, when producing their own salad bags after harvesting produce from the allotment. Their progress is tracked carefully using the school's very efficient and coherent assessment systems. Records show that students make excellent progress in core skills, and in their behaviour and attitudes to work and learning. Some of their work will lead to recognised vocational and foundation-level accreditation, and some students have experienced independent work placements in the local community. The outstanding curriculum is relevant, and meets students' needs fully. It is organised as a 'learning matrix' that is cross-referenced with core elements of learning that include citizenship skills, personal development, health and safety practices, relationships, and key skills in language, literacy and numeracy. The pace of learning is rapid, reflecting the students' excellent achievements in all elements of the work that they do. Teachers and support staff plan work and tasks diligently and sensitively so that all the students can benefit. There are excellent links with other schools and organisations, with extensive and ambitious plans for continuing development of the curriculum that extend beyond the school environment. Given the students'

restricted life chances, post-16 provision effectively continues the school's high-quality work in preparing students for the future and improving opportunities for them.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

The quality of boarding at Bradstow School is outstanding. It contributes to the attainment of excellent outcomes for students across all areas of service provision. Students are at the centre of the schools activities and inform its development; health is promoted and student's welfare, rights and safety are protected. Students have excellent opportunities for enjoyment, learning, and development. The quality of residential accommodation varies between outstanding and satisfactory. The inclusive and engaging leadership is demonstrably effective in maximising life opportunities for students.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The uniqueness of each student is recognised and respected. Difference in the physical world and in behaviours, values and beliefs are explored. Activities and support are tailored to fit students individual needs, background and circumstance.

Student's health needs are met. Health promotion covers student's physical, mental, emotional, and sexual health. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged, and students provided with individualised guidance, advice and support for their health and personal care. Training, supervision and guidance in relation to health promotion are provided to staff and information given to parents and carers. Students benefit from catering services that promote healthy eating, facilitate choice and which are informed by research. Students participate in a range of physical activities. Students with weight problems receive appropriate support. The management and administration of medication is organised well. The arrangements made to secure routine and specialist health care services are very good, supporting students to overcome obstacles to achieve this.

Safety is considered in all aspects of boarding provision: Students report feeling safe. Safe recruitment ensures that only suitable people are employed here.

Students gain skills to self manage their behaviour as much as possible. There are excellent systems to monitor and analyse incidents to ensure the school and students learn from them. Support is regularly reviewed and adapted as developments occur. Staff are trained and have the skills and knowledge they need to make an effective contribution to student progress and implement well planned behavioural strategies. Students are protected from abuse. Safeguarding procedures are clear and known to staff. Students know how to complain if they are unhappy, and they have people they can talk to about any concern.

Students benefit from an excellent integration of education and boarding provision. The staffing structure allows students to benefit from support that moves very smoothly between the complementary settings. All students benefit from activities linked to their education plans. Students have a say in making these plans. Appropriate and frequent use is made of learning opportunities outside the classroom in line with the school's motto of 'Living and Learning Together'. Students access a wide range of recreational facilities, both on site and in the wider community.

Communication and behaviour programmes enable students to participate and have a say. This is integral to everything the school does. Student's needs are collaboratively assessed, drawing on the contribution of students and where appropriate their families, carers or representatives of other agencies. Admissions are carefully planned. Parents and carers are regularly contacted

and consulted with. Students are able to have regular contact with families and friends. The school provides guidance and support to parents, carers and other people involved in the lives of students. This effectively promotes consistent use of effective strategies.

Excellent preparation and planning support a smooth transition when the students leave the school. Students benefit from excellent opportunities to gain life skills and are able to move towards an attainable range of self directed activities. Suitable onward provision is arranged to promote continued progress after Bradstow. Work related learning opportunities take place on and off site. Students leave the school with evidence of their achievements and an understanding of their capabilities.

Living accommodation comprises the main school and purpose built accommodation block. Within the main school building there are three accommodation units, providing satisfactory living space for between 9-10 students. The facilities have been suitably adapted, are kept clean, safe, and as homely as possible. In the purpose built block there are living groups of just four students. The layout and design of the facilities optimises learning opportunities and creates positive experiences for students in a domestic type environment. All Students benefit from the very creative ways in which the school grounds are used to integrate and present learning, recreation and leisure opportunities.

Leadership and management are very effective. The contribution of students and staff to the running and development of the school is recognised and used in positive ways. Inclusion and participation is visibly promoted. Well organised induction and training programmes provide staff with excellent opportunities to develop skills and knowledge relevant to their roles. Staff deployment is well thought out and meets the aims of the school, providing good quality supervision to students. Key to the schools success is a highly competent and transparent approach to quality assurance. The school is proactive in building on its strengths and identifying areas where its activities may be further enhanced.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the proposed plans to extend the range of learning resources that promote language, literacy and communication across the whole curriculum.

National minimum standards to be met to improve social care.

The boarding provision meets all national minimum standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. All the pupils join the school with skills and abilities that are extremely limited in comparison with age- related expectations in the core skills of language, communication and mathematics. Pupils have experienced considerable disruption to their education and personal lives, and are disapplied from national tests and from the requirement to learn a modern foreign language. Records show that the vast majority of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder make outstanding progress in communication and in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because the staff tailor work carefully to match the needs of all pupils, whatever their capabilities. Many pupils start with anxieties and emotional difficulties that affect their behaviour. They make rapid progress in their emotional and personal development, and records show that there is a remarkable improvement in the behaviour of all pupils. They also make very good progress in ICT, for example when using keyboards and touch screens. The vast majority of pupils and

post-16 students make excellent progress to meet challenging individual and curricular targets, even though the attainment of most pupils is understandably low when compared with national norms in mainstream schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils have expressed their views through pictorial questionnaires, and the results of their responses show that they thoroughly enjoy school and have a strong sense of pride and identity with others around them. Attendance and behaviour are excellent, and pupils display positive attitudes and respond very well in lessons to the activities provided. They have formed trusting relationships with the staff and with other pupils. They learn how to keep themselves safe and are often given responsibilities. Those who can communicate verbally show initiative, as when one boy volunteered to photocopy a document for an inspector. They know how to eat healthily and keep fit when participating enthusiastically in sport, dance, swimming and physical education.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their excellent development in the spiritual and cultural aspects of their learning is reflected in attractive displays and photographs of celebrations of festivals and customs from around the world. Members of the school council are proud of their role, and are encouraged to make helpful suggestions in support of school improvement. The pupils are regularly involved in local enterprise events, and these are having a positive impact on pupils' continually improving personal qualities. Pupils learn together as a cohesive and positive community where no one is there to judge them, but rather to encourage them and make them feel valued, so that they can taste success and a sense of achievement, in most cases for the first time in their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Learning takes place in classes at a brisk pace because teachers and support staff are careful to plan work that engages the interest of all pupils. Practical and engaging activities, such as constructing symmetry patterns in mathematics and using the interactive whiteboard to identify individuals during communication lessons, contribute to the very positive working ethos that is in evidence in all classes. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive. The consistent application of the school's positive behaviour management policy means that the pace of learning is consistent. Additional adults such as teaching assistants and nursery nurses make a strong contribution and are highly skilled, offering one-to-one support for the most vulnerable pupils, enabling them to participate fully in all activities. Excellent use is made of music as a medium for improving the pupils' communication skills, and this was seen to very good effect to encourage a pupil to follow a beat and express his thoughts and feelings.

Pupils know their targets, and the highly effective use of transition cards by all staff helps the pupils to explain what they are thinking and to work toward their individual targets. Staff expectations are consistently high, and very effective use is made of specialist expertise and tailor-made resources to support many aspects of teaching, such as music, outdoor learning, language and communication. There is now scope to develop communication resources further across all curriculum subjects and projects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very responsive to pupils' needs and contributes strongly to their overall achievement and enjoyment. Helpful cross-curricular links are being developed which enable pupils to transfer skills and knowledge and apply these to practical and productive activities, such as market gardening, the performing and fine arts, and ICT. Pupils who can communicate verbally are provided with challenging opportunities to develop the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. Constant review, coupled with imaginative strategies, enables the school to meet the wide range of different needs. For example, the school has introduced innovative resources that foster the development of literacy skills and personal development very well. The staff utilise a familiar and conventional form of signing for all pupils, to help them communicate effectively. The pupils respond very well and are able to access excellent resources provided in the form of pictures, photographs and symbols. The school has excellent planning systems that incorporate a range of pathways to learning and development, which provide a very good balance between academic, vocational and tertiary courses. These are effective in promoting work-related learning and enterprise, as well as encouraging pupils and post-16 students to be healthy and safe. There is an outstanding range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities devised by the school, as reflected in the numerous awards and recognition of achievement. The school very successfully works in close partnership with a wide variety of agencies and providers, so that a highly effective education is made available beyond the classroom.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The impact of the high quality of pastoral care, teaching and support that pupils receive has a direct bearing on their excellent behaviour, attendance, increasing confidence and self-esteem. Records show that their antisocial behaviours reduce sharply, and that they increasingly meet their personal targets. Robust safety procedures, including highly specialised and accredited in-house staff training in intervention and positive behaviour management, enable the students and staff to engage and learn together effectively and safely. In addition, the rich variety of opportunities and activities planned by the staff foster a great sense of community cohesion and self-worth.

There are effective child protection and safeguarding arrangements, and risk assessments are regularly undertaken for all aspects of school life. The most vulnerable pupils are extremely well cared for, and there are highly effective intervention strategies that help to accelerate their progress or improve their behaviour. There are excellent systems for tracking pupils' academic and personal development. The senior management team and staff make very effective use of the network of computers to record and track the progress of individual pupils, as well as that of different groups. This information is very well used to determine where to direct support and to set challenging individual and curricular targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the school knows extremely well its own strengths and what needs to be improved further. The headteacher, together with the leadership

teams of both the education and boarding provisions, is innovative and energetic in seeking ways to improve the school and its resources. All the staff have a good oversight of pupils' achievements based upon a secure analysis of assessment and performance data, supported by the regular monitoring of pupils. Governors, together with the senior management team, staff, business manager and administrators, hold an accurate view of current strengths balanced with a realistic appreciation of what needs to be done to improve things further. For instance, several staff possess considerable teaching and welfare expertise and are recognised trainers in many aspects of the school's specialised work. This expertise is continually shared through in-house and accredited staff training. The school has achieved excellent recognition of this by outside bodies and other settings that provide for pupils with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Governors possess a wealth of experience and a detailed knowledge of the school. They provide strong support for the headteacher and staff team, and are fully involved in shaping the priorities for school improvement. These include the innovative development of the highly specialised learning resource centre, with ambitious plans to continually update and tailor learning resources to meet the individual needs and capabilities of all pupils and post-16 students. All staff, leaders and governors are highly effective and are a real asset to 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	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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

01 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bradstow School, Broadstairs, CT10 1BY

You were all so nice to the inspectors when they came to see you. We really enjoyed seeing you working hard and having fun. You go to a fantastic school, and we can see why you love school so much. Well done to you and all the staff and governors. We were very pleased with your excellent behaviour and the way you all try hard. I really enjoyed seeing how clever you were when growing vegetables, digging, and painting garden furniture. You are also very good at using computers, and thank you to the pupil who photocopied something for me - well done, that was brilliant and very helpful!

The inspector who visited your rooms where you stay each night was also very pleased with the way the staff look after you, and the way you care for them too. You are all doing very well learning to read and speak to others using those lovely cards with words and pictures. I was very impressed with your signing skills and really enjoyed watching the video of last summer's performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream. That was terrific, and I could see that your parents enjoyed it too.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are doing a great job, especially in helping the school to grow and develop still further. There have been some excellent improvements since your last inspection in 2005.

I have asked your teachers to carry on making special resources, books and equipment that will help you to do even better in all the work you do.

You can all help too by carrying on trying hard and supporting your teachers and carers. The inspectors thought that you were all fantastic young people, and I will always remember my short stay at your excellent school. I wish you, your parents, staff and governors the very best, and I am so pleased to have met you all.

Yours faithfully

Charalambos Loizou

Lead Inspector