

# The Edith Borthwick School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115464
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326202
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Lewis

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	148
Sixth form	34
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	4
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Linda Mead
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Ian Boatman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 October 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Fennes Road Church Street Bocking Braintree Essex CM7 5LA

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<b>Age group</b>	3–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 October 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	326202

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Edith Borthwick is a school for pupils aged 3 to 19 years with a range of learning needs including moderate and severe learning difficulties. The needs of the pupils have changed since the last inspection. Two-thirds of pupils aged between three and 11 years are now pupils with autism. The range of need is more varied for older pupils, including large groups of pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties and autism. Because of their learning difficulties, the pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment. Nearly all have, or are in the process of, receiving a statement of special educational need.

There are four children in the school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The post-16 students are taught partly on-site with Years 10 and 11 in the school's 'Transition Department' and also in local colleges. Pupils are from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and almost all are of White British heritage. The school has also had major staff changes and a serious fire since the last inspection. The school is federated with another local special school. This was initiated by the two schools in consultation with the local authority. A single governing body is in place for both schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents praise its work. They say that at times, it has provided a 'lifeline' not only for their child but also for themselves. Inspectors agree that the school's work with families, through its family key worker system and the way it works with other agencies, is outstanding. This high level of concern for the individual is reflected in all areas of the school including the EYFS and contributes to the excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils know that staff want the best for them and they, too, try very hard in all that they do. The school has formed strong partnerships with the community. These mean that pupils have many opportunities to be involved in activities that strengthen their learning and also support the community's understanding of their different needs.

Pupils' achievement and progress are good overall. These are good in the school phase department (aged six to 14) and in the transition department (14–19 years) for all groups of pupils, whatever their particular learning difficulty. Students at post-16 achieve well and gain a good range of appropriate awards. The school misses the opportunity for more qualifications to be taken by some younger or higher ability pupils in Key Stage 4 and the amount of time used in direct teaching is less than that recommended. Achievement and progress are satisfactory in EYFS. This is partly because the poor accommodation restricts the experiences the children can have at any one time and the ways in which the staff can teach. Therefore children make satisfactory rather than good progress in some areas of learning. Pupils throughout the school and in the EYFS make strongest progress in communication, early literacy and numeracy, their social relationships with others, their self-help skills and the ways in which they take responsibility for their learning and their behaviour. Personal development and behaviour are good. Almost all staff are skilled at managing pupils' behaviour so that even those with the most challenging needs are helped to manage it for themselves.

Teaching and learning, including assessment, are good overall. The strengths in teaching include the staff's personal knowledge of pupils' needs and their clarity about 'next steps'. Lessons are lively and use a range of interesting sensory materials that engage the interest and enthusiasm of learners. This means that they will 'have a go' even when the learning is challenging. The planned opportunities and learning experiences provided are satisfactory. The school has very recently changed the way it plans for and teaches the different subjects, so that it is supporting more systematically key skills such as literacy, communication, thinking and information and communication technology (ICT), in very practical ways.

The leadership and management at all levels within the school are good. The headteacher and the extended leadership team have worked enthusiastically to improve the ways in which they monitor the school's work. However, sometimes there has been a lack of rigour in checking that policies and procedures are up to date and followed consistently. This means that although governors are very committed and support the school well, governance and care, support and guidance are satisfactory overall. The school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. The newly strengthened leadership team has a good grasp of what needs to be done and how to achieve this and the school has good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Students make good progress and achieve well because the teaching is good, learning experiences are well matched to their needs, and they are well supported. The accommodation, in temporary buildings, is relatively spacious and rooms have been adapted well to provide a more adult environment in which students can work, relax and acquire life skills. The addition of a common room is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Provision for those with complex needs is good. Staff use a suitable range of methods and strategies appropriate to the needs of the students, including signs, symbols and objects to aid understanding and include learners. Adults treat students with respect and work effectively as a team to secure good engagement and responses and students feel secure and happy. Personal development is good because the curriculum is sharply focused on preparing students for the next step. As a result, students acquire vocational skills, increase their basic skills at a good rate and show good levels of maturity. There is a suitable range of courses for students of all abilities at this stage and all leave with certificates that recognise their achievements.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Support for children's learning and development is satisfactory, as is achievement overall. However, the children make good progress in communication, language and early literacy and personal development. This is because of the emphasis placed on these areas of learning and the systematic support for children's personal targets. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good observational records of children's progress and achievements are kept. These are now being linked well with the new requirements for the EYFS. Staff work together to deal consistently with the very varied needs of the children and manage these well. Children quickly settle and feel safe and there is good attention to their welfare and well-being. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

EYFS staff work thoughtfully to overcome the many restrictions in the accommodation. Careful planning by staff and joint working with the Year 1 and 2 teacher mean that children have satisfactory opportunities for freer choices and access to a larger space at times. However, the classroom is too small and restricts children's learning opportunities particularly for creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. Although the outside area has been improved, it has limited cover and this restricts its use during wet weather.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the provision within the EYFS and particularly the accommodation so that all the experiences that should be available to children at this stage can be more easily provided.
- Review the length of time given to direct teaching and develop the range of courses available to students in Key Stage 4.
- Ensure all policies that guide practice, particularly those related to care and guidance are updated regularly so that they reflect the school's current practice and external guidance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The emphasis on key skills and applying personal targets in different contexts is reflected in good progress in communication, language and literacy and in numeracy, ICT and personal, social, health and citizenship education throughout the school. This means that pupils also make good progress in other subjects because they listen well and think about their learning deeply. Pupils with autism and those with the most complex learning needs achieve well at all key stages because the teaching and curriculum are very relevant to their learning needs. Like others within the school, they are able to take a range of qualifications by the time they leave school. Pupils take such qualifications as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Transition Challenge, Bronze Youth Awards and Entry Level certificates for literacy, numeracy, science and design technology. However, the school is rightly reviewing the range of Key Stage 4 awards and planning to extend them both in terms of level and subjects to enable pupils to achieve well in a wider range of subjects.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. They show polite and cooperative behaviour between themselves and with adults. This is because staff are effective role models and promote an ethos of celebration and achievement throughout the school. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons. They make good progress in spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through well-planned assemblies and the consistent delivery of personal, social and health education, which is taught so that it is meaningful for all pupils. Relationships are a particular strength. Pupils learn about individual differences, to express their feelings appropriately and to begin to empathize with one another. Where behaviour is challenging it is dealt with calmly and effectively. Pupils mostly feel safe in school but a few express concerns about bullying at playtime, feeling that this is not always dealt with. The school has taken this seriously and concerns have been resolved satisfactorily. Pupils know that to enjoy a healthy lifestyle they need exercise and a balanced diet. The Student Forum helps pupils learn about each other and how they contribute to the school community. It enables pupils to have a voice and they feel that this is listened to. They learn to value their own community and to appreciate the differences in how people live in other parts of the world. Enterprise activities and partnership with local colleges prepare older students well for life after school.

Although there are an increasing number of pupils with complex medical needs, attendance is good and improving.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall. Support for communication and for key skills is consistently strong and reflects the good work and staff training that the school has put into this area, including the work of its higher level teaching assistants. The strengths of teaching are in its relevance to pupils' needs, the good use of sensory materials and the ways in which teachers plan different work for pupils. Pupils learn well because of this and because lessons build on their interests successfully. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils'

learning. They often lead the enrichment activities and help to keep individual pupils very well engaged and on task in lessons. This strong teamwork means pupils receive consistent messages about what they are doing and this encourages them to keep trying their best. Almost all staff manage behaviour well so that it only occasionally disrupts the learning of others. Assessment is good. Teachers make good use of the information that they have about children's needs to plan their lessons and this helps ensure the next steps are manageable but challenging.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

Much work has gone into developing a curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 9 that is firmly based on key skills and provides meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences by linking subjects together. This new approach was implemented in September 2008 and it is clear that pupils are thoroughly enjoying their lessons, although the impact on progress is not yet discernible. Themed days, such as the Black and White day provide a good variety of experiences too. Careful planning and checking of topics ensures that pupils do not miss out or repeat work unnecessarily. In both stages of education, pupils are appropriately grouped according to need, as well as age, and this helps to ensure that individual needs are met. In the transition phase, pupils experience a much greater variety of groupings as staff strive to make the curriculum more personal to each pupil. The school has not yet considered how it will support pupils in moving from the school phase to the transition phase. There is good enrichment, in the form of visits, visitors and lunchtime clubs. The latter are not formally planned or assessed. This means that taught time falls a little short of the recommended length in Key Stage 4. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a sound preparation for the next step, whether it is college or remaining at school. There is a suitable range of accreditation for all but the most able pupils, a few of whom are capable of tackling GCSE courses. Careers education and enterprise activities help to prepare them for the world of work and college links raise their awareness of opportunities in further education. The accommodation restricts what staff can do in a number of ways. Space is limited in some classes and there is too little storage space.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Parents are most appreciative of the excellent support and sensitive and constructive partnership provided by the family workers. This support is focused around a plan that draws on several agencies and identifies goals that the school and the family work towards. The goals include increasing pupils' independence skills, encouraging more socially acceptable behaviour and facilitating access to community resources, such as shops and clubs.

Care support and guidance are satisfactory overall, however, because some elements of the school's procedures and policies have not been updated or are not rigorously followed. Although pupils' safety is carefully protected, risk assessments sometimes have limited detail. In addition, although pupils are helped to think about what they are learning satisfactorily in lessons, their involvement in setting their personal targets and taking ownership of these is limited. Good electronic records enable staff to follow pupils' progress, and annual reviews ensure that progress towards the objectives identified on each pupil's statement are checked. Pupils are involved in these reviews where appropriate.

A model policy on anti-bullying is due for approval by governors but this is not entirely appropriate for a school of this type as it does not reflect the particular strategies used at the



school. Pupils with challenging behaviour have suitable behaviour management plans, but not all staff have yet been trained in dealing with physical outbursts.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Governors, the extended leadership team and all staff share a common vision and high aspirations for the school, its pupils and students. This is evident in the way that they have embraced innovations with enthusiasm and in their determination to find ways to improve the building while they are waiting for the new school. All these innovations have helped the school to move forward despite staff changes and the recent fire. However, sometimes this means that there has not been the attention to detail there should be particularly in relation to policy updating and the recording of information. This is why governance is satisfactory overall. Self-evaluation has improved and is now good. The leadership has used the data it has to make changes to the curriculum and target support for aspects of teaching and learning. However much of this is too new to have had an impact. The school works very successfully to include pupils in school life. The various teams supporting children and their families ensure everyone has a similar opportunity to succeed and be part of both the school and wider community.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	3	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3	

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	3
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**

6 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Edith Borthwick School, Braintree, CM7 5LA

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your lessons last week. It was good to hear how much you enjoy being at school and how hard you are working. We agree with you that your school is a good school and that you are really making progress particularly in your talking and your reading, writing and number work. We know that you love your computer work and that you are doing well here too and in managing your own behaviour. We were pleased to hear that the school will be rebuilt in a few years so that you all have better space for learning.

Thank you to the School Forum and to those of you who talked with us and told us what you liked learning about. It was great to hear about all the things you do and enjoy.

Mr Boatman and the governors and teachers have worked really hard to make your lessons interesting. We have now asked them to think about how they can improve three main things. We want them to:

- find better rooms for the youngest children so they have more space to move about and try out different activities
- think about how you can take even more courses and gain awards particularly by the time you are 16 years old
- check all the different policies they have so they are sure they tell staff exactly what they must do to keep you safe and to help them to teach.

Once again, thank you and best wishes

Sue Lewis

Lead inspector