

Bradfields School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119043
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	326930
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Farrell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	230
Sixth form	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rita Menzies
Headteacher	Kim Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2006
School address	Churchill Avenue Chatham ME5 0LB
Telephone number	01634 683990
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Bradfields School educates pupils with moderate learning difficulties and additional needs including speech and language, physical, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in its Fieldview Unit where 47 pupils are educated, 15 of whom are over 16 years old. A further education centre (FEC) for 57 students with moderate learning difficulties and additional difficulties occupies a separate site four miles from the main school. Sixth form provision serves all students, including those at the Fieldview Unit, aged 16 to 19 years. Not all pupils who attend the school transfer to sixth form as some go on to work or college. The school has 20 pupils cared for by the local authority. About 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. There are around 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. It has many outstanding features. Parents are extremely supportive and typically say, 'Since attending Bradfields I have seen my child flourish in all areas' and 'Every time you visit the school, there is a strong feeling of calm.' The school has developed outstanding partnership with others including businesses and other services. Thoroughly evaluated community cohesion is a strength because it permeates the life of the school and includes extensive local and international links. Extended school provision, including support for families, has been very well developed, enriching what the school offers. Good leadership and management set an excellent sense of direction and aspire to be at the cutting edge of developments. Staff responsibilities are clear and strongly directed towards improving provision and governors provide good support and challenge. However, middle managers do not always fully use information about different pupil groups and subject aspects to see if progress can be improved further. The school evaluates itself well and effectively focuses staff training and support where improvement is needed. In the good sixth form good leadership and management set a clear direction supporting outstanding care, guidance and support, excellent personal development and an outstanding curriculum. Good teaching and learning in the sixth form enable students to make good progress and achieve a suitable range of qualifications.

In the whole school, outstanding care, guidance and support ensure careful assessments of risk and robust procedures to keep pupils safe. Procedures support pupils' learning and development very well and care is particularly strong. Consequently, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils behave extremely well in response to very high expectations of staff, knowing they can always talk to adults they trust, so pupils feel very safe. They strive to live healthily because the school provides many supportive opportunities such as healthy eating choices and physical activities. Pupils love coming to school and consequently attend regularly. They contribute to the community extremely well and are acutely aware of the needs of others less fortunate because the school continuously highlights the importance of community. Good economic well-being is nurtured through good progress in English and mathematics and very strong opportunities for work experience and links with other schools and colleges. The school uses a wide range of data to help ensure pupils' progress is good. However, use of data from beyond the school is underdeveloped and the school recognises this.

A major contribution to pupils' excellent development is the outstanding curriculum with its very strong emphasis on social and personal development and independence. It is enriched by numerous opportunities to participate in the local community and combines education, therapy and care very well indeed because staff and others beyond school work so closely together. Pupils' attainment in both the school and sixth form is exceptionally low because of their disabilities and disorders. However, good teaching and learning ensure pupils and students make good progress. In lessons, relationships are excellent, behaviour is managed extremely well and very clear planning and lesson structure helps pupils strive to do their best. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution especially in small group working. However, teachers do not always deploy teaching assistants to best effect and opportunities to use visual strategies such as symbols and photographic clues for reading are sometimes missed. This slows pupils' progress particularly in lessons that are only satisfactory. Since its previous inspection the school has improved its curriculum and many elements of personal development and has great forward momentum, giving excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management give the provision a clear sense of direction, and managers across the provision for students with autistic spectrum disorder and students in the FEC work closely together seeking ways to improve. Outstanding care, guidance and support, with particular strengths in care aspects, balance the need for safety and providing challenges and opportunities for independence very well. Great attention is paid to ensuring many professionals from within and beyond the provision work together very closely to benefit students. This leads to students' excellent personal development and well-being. They are courteous, have increasing confidence, are open and honest and greatly value the provision. The excellent curriculum, emphasising the development of social and personal skills including independence, contributes very strongly. Attainment is exceptionally low because of the students' disabilities and disorders. However, good teaching and learning help students made good progress. Relationships are very trusting and high expectations of adult behaviour, and warmth and humour in lessons bring out the best in students. Teachers do not always deploy teaching assistants as fully as they should and opportunities are missed to use visual systems including symbols, slowing progress in satisfactory lessons especially. Opportunities for continued community learning to ensure that skills and knowledge are secured in real life situations are not as fully developed as they could be and this is recognised by staff

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring teachers always deploy teaching assistants fully and use visual strategies more effectively.
- Make more effective use of information on pupils' progress, including data from beyond the school, to ensure support is as sharply focused as possible to enhance progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment is exceptionally low because of pupils' disabilities and disorders. However, pupils make good progress in the school and the sixth form with pupils aged 14 to 16 years making particularly strong progress because of good teaching. Pupils with different types of disabilities and disorders make similar progress and different groups including boys and girls and pupils looked after by the local authority all make good progress. Pupils meet challenging learning targets set by the school. Pupils know their targets and strive hard to reach them. A very good range of suitable accreditation of learning is carefully linked to pupils' previous attainments so that expectations are realistic but challenging. The school has worked hard and successfully to greatly increase the range and levels of examinations in the previous three years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and pupils have a very strong sense of right and wrong because the school greatly emphasises this. They feel very safe because they have confidence in staff and know they can always talk to someone if they have concerns. Because they greatly enjoy school, pupils attend regularly and are punctual to lessons. They know about food, exercise and other aspects of healthy life, participating in sporting activities in the community and making healthy food choices during relaxed and enjoyable lunchtimes.

Attitudes to work and their behaviour are excellent because pupils appreciate how staff respond to them, one pupil saying, 'The teachers deal with behaviour brilliantly.' They enjoy celebrating their own achievement and those of others because the school gives numerous opportunities to do so, reinforced by awards, trophies and displays throughout the school. Pupils show great empathy with others less fortunate than themselves. One pupil said, 'We take education for granted but in other countries they have to walk miles to school.' Pupils contribute to the community very effectively. Those participating in Woodland Enterprise buy goods to make into baskets and sell them in the local shop, effectively developing skills for the future. Good economic well-being is developed because of good progress in English and mathematics and strong work experience and college opportunities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons observed by inspectors ranged from satisfactory to outstanding but were good overall in the school and sixth form. Among common strengths are very good relationships in the classroom, clear planning and good assessment that focuses on how pupils learn and can do better. In a tutorial session pupils were able to talk freely about when they had made mistakes because the teacher had created a respectful atmosphere. Pupils respond very well when explanations are clear and they can handle objects and participate fully in practical activities. Teaching assistants generally make a good contribution especially when working with small groups of pupils. However, at other times, teachers do not always deploy teaching assistants as fully as they should and visual strategies including symbols are not always used as effectively as they should be. These factors slow progress especially in the minority of lessons that are only satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum in the school and sixth form meets statutory requirements and meets the learning needs of pupils very well. It is especially strong in encouraging social and personal development, and learning how to learn and independence are very successfully emphasised. The deployment of subject specialist teachers and subject dedicated teaching assistants works very well to ensure very wide-ranging, exciting curriculum activities are well focused. Visits, visitors, expeditions such as to Dartmoor, after-school clubs and very full use of the local community enrich and enhance the vibrant curriculum. Care, therapy and education are very well integrated and a wide range of professionals work very closely together to provide smooth transitions from one to the other. Links with mainstream schools and colleges are very strong and effectively used. Work experience makes a greatly valued contribution. The whole curriculum contributes greatly to pupils' eagerness to attend school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The excellent commitment of staff to meeting pupils' diverse needs contributes to pupils feeling very safe and secure. This can be vividly seen in the schools' view that pupils' behaviour emerges from learning needs and deserves support. Arrangements for safeguarding are strong and health and safety risk assessments comprehensive. As a result, pupils use tools safely and are aware

of the dangers of smoking, alcohol and other drugs. Excellent family support and guidance together with highly effective counselling support for pupils help ensure they reach challenging targets. Because the work of professionals from different agencies such as the health services and education services are brought together in an exemplary way, vulnerable pupils make similar progress to other pupils. The school takes great care that pupils are very well prepared for moving on to next phases of education or work and very well supported as they first start school. The school gathers and analyses a wide range of pertinent data on pupils' progress, using this particularly effectively for pupils aged 14 to 16 years. However, the use of data from beyond the school to further refine support and ensure that progress is as high as it can be remains a priority.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management have outstanding aspects. A year after the previous inspection, the then new senior leaders established an effective baseline to inform a new school development plan using frameworks based on national accreditation and Quality Marks. This has helped provide an excellent sense of direction to the school. Outstanding community cohesion is a strength of the school because very effective auditing, planning and evaluation have nurtured very strong links locally and internationally. This programme permeates the whole school resulting in pupils being very sensitive to cultural differences. The structure of leadership and responsibilities drives the school's forward momentum and is focused firmly on achievement. Leaders and managers have introduced highly effective support systems which have a powerful positive effect on pupils' personal development. Governors offer good challenge and support to the school although recruitment difficulties and limited availability of some governors during the school day limits their capacity to contribute to school development. Resources are generally used effectively and the school is developing use of national benchmarking information to evaluate its effectiveness and value for money. Middle leaders make a good contribution to management but do not always rigorously analyse data on pupils' progress in relation to different groups of pupils and aspects of their subject and are keen to rectify this.

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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?	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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

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/or disabilities make progress	2	2

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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
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?	2	2
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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bradfields School, Chatham ME5 0LB

My colleague and I really enjoyed meeting you and talking with you when we inspected Bradfields recently. Thank you for telling us about the school and what you thought about it. You are obviously very proud of Bradfields and rightly so.

We found many good and excellent things about the school. You develop extremely well and your behaviour is excellent. The school cares for you and supports you very well indeed. The curriculum is varied and exciting. The school is well led and managed and teaching is good so you progress well.

There are two things the school could do even better so I have asked the staff to:

- make sure all the adults in lessons are able to play their fullest part
- use information, for example how pupils progress in other schools, to see if staff can identify where you might do even better.

You can help by continuing to work as hard as you do now.

With every good wish for your future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Farrell Lead inspector