

Brantridge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134063
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	341427
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Stuart Charlton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	7–13
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The proprietor
Chair	Lloyd Richards
Headteacher	Tamsin Blythe
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2007
School address	Staplefield Place Staplefield Haywards Heath RG17 6EQ
Telephone number	01444 400228
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Boarding provision	Brantridge School
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC042663
Social care inspector	Paul Taylor

Age group	7–13
Inspection date(s)	2–3 February 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and two social care inspectors. Over two thirds of the inspection time was spent looking at learning and all six teachers were observed. The inspectors visited nine lessons, and held meetings with the proprietor, the chair of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The work of the school was observed and the inspector looked at the improvement plan, minutes of senior management and the governing body meetings, a range of other documentation and six parent questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well leaders and managers, including the governing body, monitor and evaluate the provision to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can
- the effectiveness of the boarding provision to ensure that the high standards of care identified in recent reports have been maintained
- the systems to set and track targets for pupils to determine if these are sufficiently rigorous and robust to ensure that all make the progress of which they are capable
- how the school measures and evaluates the impact of care, guidance and support on the outcomes for pupils to demonstrate improvements in their personal development and attitudes to learning.

Information about the school

Brantridge is a residential special school for a maximum of 41 boys aged seven to 13 years who have a statement of special educational needs related to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It is part of Grafam Grange Special Educational Trust Ltd, a registered charity. All pupils are referred from local authorities in south-east England and the school's admissions criteria state that pupils must have a stable family/home situation. Virtually all pupils are boarders and the vast majority are of White British heritages with a few from Asian or Black British Caribbean backgrounds. None speaks English as an additional language. There have been significant changes in senior management since the last inspection which have only recently been finalised.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Brantridge is a good school. The boarding provision and the care, guidance and support that staff provide for pupils' personal development are excellent. Safeguarding procedures are exemplary and ensure the school is a safe and secure environment in which the vast majority of pupils make rapid improvement in their behaviour and self-esteem from a very low base. By the time they leave, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with that expected because they make good progress and achieve well. This enables them to move successfully into the next stage of their education, sometimes in a mainstream school. Attendance is good and the residential provision makes a positive contribution by enabling pupils to realise the benefits of good attendance and punctuality. Behaviour is good and parents are pleased with the school and the positive effect it has on their children. Each individual's personal development needs are carefully considered, so that support is well tailored to meet them.

Teachers establish very good relationships with their pupils and these are the basis of the excellent guidance and support for pupils' personal development. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress against the challenging academic targets which have been set are rigorous and robust. Teachers plan their lessons conscientiously, but do not always indicate clearly how pupils' skills, particularly in writing, will be developed. In contrast, in an excellent music lesson with a group of Key Stage 2 pupils, each was given a personal development target and also clear targets for the drumming skills they were expected to gain. The good curriculum has a clear focus on personal development and basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. However, when pupils enter the school, their writing skills are weak. Although these improve through focused individual support, the school has rightly identified that the pace of improvement could be quicker if teachers provided more opportunities to develop these skills in all subjects.

The headteacher took up her substantive post just before the last inspection and since that time the school has improved rapidly. She provides a very clear vision for how the provision should develop and the determination to implement it. She is well supported by her deputy and the head of care. Together, they have established a staffing base which now has a common sense of purpose and very good teamwork. A clear path for improvement, based on accurate and honest self-evaluation, has been mapped out. The systems to monitor the provision provide good quality information but they are relatively recent and, as yet, do not give a detailed picture of improvement over time by comparing performance with that of similar schools.

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The governing body is very supportive of the school and is effective in holding the school to account. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. As yet, it does not make best use of its status within the Grafham Trust to develop the national and international aspects of its work. The improvements which the school has made on the attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning of the majority of pupils, during a period of significant change, show that the capacity for further sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can by:
 - teachers making better use in their planning of information about pupils' progress, particularly in writing, to clearly identify the needs of each individual in all subjects and how these will be met
 - leaders developing their use of data so that they can compare pupils' performance with that of those in similar schools.
- Develop its provision for community cohesion by:
 - completing its audit of provision in this area
 - using its status within the Grafham Trust more effectively to develop links at national and international level to promote pupils' understanding of different communities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment of each pupil cohort varies widely depending on their needs and previous educational experience. However, since the last inspection, the school's data show that by the time they leave, the vast majority reach the levels which would be expected. This represents good progress for all pupils regardless of their background and ability. In a Year 6 science lesson, pupils with a wide range of ability were each challenged successfully through the staff's knowledge of their needs and made good progress.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is based on the high expectations established by all staff and the role models they present to pupils. Pupils develop an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles. They acknowledge that the residential provision makes an excellent contribution to their understanding and explained clearly how the school's allotment and food technology lessons have made them realise the importance and excitement of growing and cooking their own food. They are quick to explain that timetabled physical education lessons and out-of-school activities help them to keep fit.

The high quality of the residential provision is crucial in helping pupils to realise the benefits of managing their own behaviour so that it does not disrupt the lives of others. All pupils who completed the survey are keen to point out that they feel safe and now enjoy their school work. One pupil captured this by explaining that 'I now get up early to get to lessons where before I wasn't bothered and stayed in bed all

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day.' Pupils make a positive contribution to their immediate community through fund-raising activities and the work of the school council. The literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology qualifications they gain, as well as other personal skills, are a good preparation for their future economic well-being. Pupils are very supportive and appreciative of the school's reward system for good behaviour, work and attendance.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is much improved since the last inspection. Staff respond quickly to the need to amend and develop their practice to address the needs of pupils across a wide range of ability, though there is room for further improvement when planning for writing, in particular. The very good relationships between staff and pupils are strengthened through individual mentoring and tutorial sessions. Teachers have good subject knowledge and mark work regularly.

The curriculum has a good balance of academic and vocational opportunities. It has the flexibility necessary to respond quickly to pupils' needs and these changes are much appreciated by pupils and contribute significantly to raising their self-esteem. The quality of the curriculum is enhanced well by partnerships with local schools and those in the Grafam Grange Trust.

Care, guidance and support are excellent and are the cornerstone for pupils' personal development. The efforts of the teaching staff are very effectively supported by the

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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excellent boarding provision. Many pupils are able to explain the challenges they face and their responses in trying to implement the ethos promoted by the school in their lives outside. They are given very good guidance about careers and opportunities available when they leave school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's focus on safeguarding ensures it is exemplary. All pupils have equal opportunities for success in school and for a better, more productive future. The headteacher's drive and ambition are fundamental to moving the school forward and ensure that discrimination is tackled very effectively.

The impact of the school's work on community cohesion is satisfactory. It has done good work with members of its immediate community, who in the past have shown concerns about pupils' behaviour. It has carried out an audit of its work but not yet fully analysed the implications. Further planned developments, particularly in relation to regional and national aspects of its work, have not been an immediate priority during the recent period of uncertainty. The governing body has made well thought out changes to its personnel and sub-committee structure so that it can act more constructively in helping to raise pupils' achievement. The school works well with parents and a wide range of agencies such as the youth offending team, social services and the West Sussex Primary Care Trust to promote pupils' well-being and their personal development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account:	
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and	2

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tackles discrimination	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Boarding provision

The quality of the boarding provision is outstanding in all areas.

The staff team is offered regular and varied training with over 80% having achieved National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in caring for children and young people. There is a thorough induction process for new staff, and regular supervision is provided. The new head of care is experienced and provides strong leadership. Good practice is promoted through the use of robust monitoring procedures. Regular regulation 33 reports are of a very high quality which reflects the conscientious and high level of involvement of the governing body.

The school's senior management team provides most effective leadership and stability and members have established a culture that analyses and promotes best practice in all areas. A stable, skilled and committed team of care staff provides a consistently excellent quality of care. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding, lying at the heart of their practice, in clear recognition of the varied and complex needs of the young people. Difference in culture and belief is seen as something to celebrate and enjoy. The medical, physical and emotional needs of each individual are identified, assessed and met to a very high standard. The school works closely with specialists such as psychologists, psychiatrists and therapists. The administration of medication is very sound with robust systems in place to protect the boarders. An experienced and committed nurse oversees pupils' health care needs very effectively. Staff maintain respect for the privacy of young people at all times and information is securely stored. A clear procedure is in place for young people and their parents or carers to voice concerns or complaints. These are addressed appropriately.

Promotion of healthy eating is high on the agenda of the catering team with menus that offer choice which address individual dietary needs whether these are health or culturally based. Bullying behaviour is taken seriously and tackled well, and any issues are promptly addressed. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are embedded within practice and rigorously followed to ensure the boarders' well-being. Staff training is comprehensive and very regularly updated and all are clear about their role and responsibilities in child protection. Young people are further protected by a robust and thorough recruitment procedure.

The school's approach to managing behavioural issues is detailed and carefully thought through. All staff follow guidelines set out in individual behaviour

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management plans that are sensitive to each young person’s specific needs and circumstances. Targets are set for promoting positive behaviour and rewards given when they are achieved. Sanctions given are appropriate. All staff are trained in physical intervention. This is rarely used because the management of challenging behaviour is focused very effectively on containment and de-escalation. Staff provide a consistent response, setting clear boundaries for all pupils. Written records of restraint are endorsed by senior managers. Very careful analysis of practice has continued to result in the lessening of incidents requiring physical intervention. Individual risk assessments are completed to a good standard and are regularly reviewed and updated. Robust health and safety procedures are in place, all necessary environmental safety checks are up-to-date, and boarders are clearly aware of the fire evacuation procedures. Fire drills occur regularly.

Pupils have numerous opportunities to share their views in formal arenas such as the school council as well as informally with a variety of staff members as well as governors and the independent visitor. They receive excellent support and nurturing from experienced care staff who clearly understand their individual needs. Boarders have their care and educational needs robustly assessed and regularly reviewed. Placement plans guide staff in responding to each boarder’s particular needs. Liaison between teaching and care staff ensures consistency. The school has a designated member of staff who ensures that close liaison and support is offered to parents and carers. This is underpinned by regular contact between each boarder’s home and their key worker. Pupils are able to contact their families and friends via mobile telephones, email and the school’s telephone.

The boarding accommodation is well designed, comfortable and recently refurbished. It is maintained to an excellent standard. The provision of activities both on and off site is excellent and offers boarders an opportunity to develop their social skills and experiences. The school prospectus and website gives a good description of the service provided.

The school has taken appropriate action to address two of the three recommendations made at the last inspection. The risk assessment for the grounds and environment has been completed to a very high standard and the school has continued to ensure that the rates of physical restraint continue to decline. The third recommendation related to ensuring that all members of staff receive training in report writing. Unfortunately, some training had to be postponed due to adverse weather conditions and consequently some staff have not yet received the training designated for them.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- ensure all staff are given training in report writing (NMS 16).

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	1
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Views of parents and carers

Only a very small number of parents and carers returned the questionnaire and the views expressed in these have been supplemented by using information derived from the school's own parental questionnaires. Many parents and carers are completely satisfied with all aspects of the school's work and the positive effect it has on their child. One said, 'The staff are doing a really good job in helping my son to change his attitude.' Most indicated that they are particularly pleased with the information they receive about their children's progress and this is confirmed by the inspection findings. They are happy with the ways in which the school provides a safe and secure environment in which pupils are successfully challenged to manage their own behaviour. There is clear evidence that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour and takes account of the suggestions and concerns made by parents and carers. The inspection findings also show that the school works effectively to tackle discrimination.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brantridge School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 6 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 33 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	33	2	33	1	17	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	1	17	2	33	3	50	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	33	3	50	1	17	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	2	33	2	33	2	33	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	0	0	5	83	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	3	50	2	33	1	17	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	50	1	17	2	33	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	33	2	33	2	33	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	4	67	1	17	1	17	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	4	67	1	17	1	17	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brantridge School, Staplefield, RG17 6EQ

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I visited your school. I was impressed with your behaviour and the very mature way in which you talked about your experience at school and at home. I enjoyed sitting in on your lessons and listening to your interesting views and some of the developments you would like to see.

You all told me that Brantridge is a good school that makes a great difference to your behaviour and attitude to education and learning, and that this sets you up for a more positive future. I fully agree with you and could see how the school helps you to develop your personal and social skills, and to manage your own behaviour. The staff set high expectations for you to live up to and lay down clear guidelines for you to follow. Most of you told me that you now enjoy coming to school because lessons are interesting and the residential provision is so good. You also pointed out that the staff work very hard to keep you safe and healthy, and you were quick to acknowledge the difference the school has made to your lives. Teaching and learning are good and improving quickly since the appointment of the new headteacher.

To ensure that things continue to improve, I want the school to:

- make your achievement even better through teachers planning more carefully how they will develop your writing skills
- use the information about your progress to compare with that of pupils in similar schools
- develop links at national and international level to help you to understand the differences between your own lives and those of people in other parts of the country and abroad.

You can help in this by making sure you do your best in every lesson.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton
Lead inspector

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