

# Breckenbrough School Limited

Inspection report for residential special school

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC007922      |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 18 March 2009 |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Simon Morley  |
| <b>Type of Inspection</b>      | Key           |

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| <b>Head / Principal</b>        |  |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 18 March 2009  |

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Outstanding:  | this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality |
| Good:         | this aspect of the provision is strong                        |
| Satisfactory: | this aspect of the provision is sound                         |
| Inadequate:   | this aspect of the provision is not good enough               |

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), a non-profit making charitable trust owns and manages Breckenbrough School. It is a residential special school for boys from nine years old up to 17 years old, who all have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of boys suffer from Asperger's syndrome, some have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and mild learning disabilities.

The school caters for up to 40 pupils, about 75 per cent board and the remainder are day pupils. The curriculum is based on the national curriculum, with a wide range of educational opportunities, including a strong focus on outdoor education and pursuits. Pupils can take up to 14 GCSEs and they are expected to progress well and achieve good grades.

Boarding accommodation is in the main school building, based on the two upper floors. All boys have their own bedrooms and share lounges and bathroom facilities. The school provides all meals. The school grounds offer a range of facilities, including a motor-cross track and a fruit and vegetables garden. There is ample parking space for visitors.

### Summary

This was an announced inspection, with only three days notice given to the school. All the outcome areas are covered and compliance with previous recommendations to improve practice was checked.

The inadequate overall quality rating is purely as a result of the school's failure to obtain Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, prior to staff starting to work in the boarding provision. In other areas, there is good and outstanding practice that is effective in promoting the health and welfare of boarders. This is seen in the all round progress pupils make, not just in education but also with their social and personal development. Boys who have been unsuccessful in mainstream schools thrive at Breckenbrough, which provides an environment and ethos that respects their individuality, is sensitive to their needs and nurtures their development.

The school is under new leadership, with a new head and chair of governors. Some changes have already been made to improve the school and there are good plans for future improvements.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### Improvements since the last inspection

Improvements have been made concerning the information the school obtains regarding boarders health needs, so these needs can be better met.

Records of certain aspects of behaviour management and staff recruitment still do not comply with national minimum standards and pose a potential risk to boarders welfare.

All staff have now had child protection training, helping to ensure boarders are protected from harm.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children receive good health care and health education, to ensure their health and welfare is promoted and protected.

The school works closely with parents, to ensure that children have regular health checks and attend any medical appointments. Whilst parents retain full responsibility for their children's health care, they are also well supported by the school and find this very helpful. Children learn about health and personal care issues at school and know how to have healthy lifestyles.

Records are kept of children's health needs, to help staff provide good physical and emotional support that the individual children need. This is enhanced by professional, psychological input and the opportunities children have for counselling. This much needed, valuable resource has been increased this academic year.

There is secure storage to keep medication safe and there are good records of medication, that are stored and administered for accurate reference. Actual administration procedures though, to ensure children get the right medication at the right time, are only satisfactory. This adds potential risks to children's health. As a result though, no medication errors have been reported. The school's policy and procedures for administering medication are not based on current good practice.

Children are well fed at school, there is plenty to eat and fresh fruit and drinking water is always available. Children help themselves to what they want to eat from a large selection of balanced, wholesome and nutritious food. There are some less healthy alternatives, which caters for children who have grown up with routines and choices that have become part of their life. Staff discreetly monitor children's individual diets and encourage healthy options. The school will cater for special diets if needed.

Children like the regular opportunities for exercise, outdoor activities and access to local leisure facilities, to help keep fit and healthy.

## Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Recruitment practice, specifically the failure to obtain CRB disclosures before staff started to work in the boarding provision, has led to the inadequate judgement as it does not satisfactorily safeguard children, from adults who may be inappropriate to work in this setting. Risks were reduced by closely supervising these staff for a short period, until their CRB checks were obtained. The school chose to start these staff, as they were needed to help manage the significantly high number of new boarders starting at the beginning of the year. Some other required records were also not available, to demonstrate that the school's recruitment meets minimum standards.

Despite this, other practice is good at ensuring children are safe at the school. Children like staying at the school, it is fun, they feel safe and they are well cared for. There is a warm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere in the school. Children are seen and treated as individuals and their privacy and dignity is respected. Staff are friendly and approachable. Children feel able to talk to them about any concerns and know how to complain. Staff are open to the

children's concerns and respond sensitively and professionally. There is frequent contact with parents, who also feel comfortable approaching the school. There is a clear complaints procedure that is readily available to children and their parents.

The school has a very clear procedure, used well in practice, for responding to child protection concerns. All staff know about the procedures and they have regular training about this subject. Children are provided with guidance about personal safety as part of the school curriculum, through activities and by care staff. There is little history of children being missing from the school. Staff are aware of what action to take to keep children safe, should this occur.

Children have mixed views and perceptions of bullying and how the school deals with this. Children do fall out with each other and though this is managed well by staff, some children think they should be stricter and use more punishments. Some children were also quite clear that bullying is not tolerated and is dealt with better under the new head. The school ethos is to give children time and space, to be non-confrontational, to talk through conflict and to support children, to develop effective strategies to manage and to be responsible for their own behaviour. This ethos is clearly lived out from the head, down in how children's behaviour is managed.

In addition to the approach to conflict resolution, merits and rewards for good behaviour are preferred over the use of sanctions or consequences for poor behaviour. Consequences are usually the loss of an activity or trip out from school. The effectiveness of these is not well monitored in terms of influencing children's behaviour. Physical intervention by staff, as a response to challenging behaviour is used as little as possible and as a last resort, to protect the safety of children and staff. This is limited to escorting children to a safer area, where they can calm down and is good practice.

There is very good risk management and a range of risk assessments about the safety of the school, fire, children's and young people's behaviour, activities and trips out. These assessments are taken into account and risks are well managed, in supporting children to develop their independence and potential. The school is kept safe and well maintained.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive outstanding support, so that they enjoy their time at school and achieve excellent progress. Boarders have great opportunities for further personal, social and educational development, whilst having a fun time too.

Children, parents, governors and staff all have very high views of the school and the care of children. Children think the school is great fun, that staff are very kind and helpful and they really enjoy the activities. The following are typical comments from boarders, 'Breckenbrough is very good at helping children like us', 'I can cope with stress better', 'I enjoy and appreciate the wide range of experiences', 'Breckenbrough is good at teaching us in better ways' and 'the staff always try their hardest to look after us'.

'Caring and approachable staff' was judged by parents to be the best thing about the school. There is an excellent whole school approach to supporting pupils with their development, through the integration of boarding and teaching staff and strong commitment to the school ethos and values. This is reflected in further comments from boarders, 'teachers stay in for

activities, they are more than just teachers and we can see another side', 'the atmosphere works well positive and relaxed' and 'they understand us'.

Staff are caring and sensitive and support children well with a range of individual needs and interests. There is a strong, inclusive ethos and very good links with the local and wider community. This ensures all children have opportunities to be involved in school projects and activities. They also benefit from being able to access local amenities, to take part in work experience, to develop their self esteem, to confidence and job opportunities.

Children enjoy and benefit from various fundraising activities, for example, links with local colleges, going to cadets and youth groups, the school's motor-cross track and bikes and numerous other leisure pursuits.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

There is good support for children to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. The school values children's views and has reformed the school council. Children are elected by their peers and they have had initial meetings to agree the council's role. The head is very keen to listen to the pupils and to act on their ideas, which includes changes to diet and the education curriculum.

There is some assessment and planning of children's needs and feedback from children and parents is very positive about how their care needs are met. Children receive weekly support from a mentor and they are involved in setting their own development targets. Children see these weekly sessions as valuable, alongside the day to day support they get. There are plans to develop and improve the assessment and care planning process. Boarders are involved in meetings about their future, they have their say and they feel listened to.

Admissions to the school are sensitive and planned to make sure children feel safe, comfortable and that they have made the right choice. This process includes a number of visits, including overnight stays and open discussions about the school's expectations and children's needs.

Children have good relationships with staff who are friendly, supportive and caring, helping to make the children's school experience enjoyable and rewarding. Children can contact their parents by telephone and email when they stay and parents are welcome to visit. The school has started to make regular home visits, to improve the contact and support for parents and also to enhance the care of children, by understanding more about their home life and how this affects them.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

There has been substantial improvement to some of the residential accommodation and plans to extend this to all of the accommodation. The improvements include new carpeting, décor and upgraded fire doors. The head also wants to improve the quality of bedroom furnishings and to create an independence training unit, for students to develop their life skills.

Overall boarding accommodation is pleasant and provides plenty of space and facilities. This is enhanced by the wider school facilities, including the playing field; gym; skate park;

motor-cross track; pool and snooker room and access to classroom facilities, for example, music; computers and design and technology, which boarders can access after school.

## Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

There are a number of changes to the management team, including a new head and a number of governors. However, in the relatively short time they have been appointed, they have developed some good plans for improvement, they are committed to continuous improvement and bringing best practice into the school. This has included some changes to the quality monitoring systems, including obtaining parental views and feedback from ex-pupils. The inadequate judgement for this outcome is as a result of the management of recruitment of new staff. Putting this aside, there is good management of the school, avoiding institutional practice and upholding the school ethos and values. This ensures a strong child-centred approach, that helps boys at the school to succeed and develop their potential.

There is very good, clear information about the school and what it provides. The admissions process gives children a good opportunity to experience school life and to clarify any further questions they have, about how they will be looked after and what the school provides.

The school is well staffed and there is a low staff turnover, giving children good continuous care from people who know them well. This is further enhanced by the good range of staff experience and access to a wide range of training. Staff are also encouraged to achieve the desired qualification in caring for children and young people. Staff receive regular supervision and support from their managers, to ensure children's care is of high quality. Staff records did not include all training that staff have undertaken, which makes it harder to plan for and to assess staff training needs.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Children are taught to be tolerant and they learn about other races and cultures. They receive quality care, based on their individual needs and there are good opportunities for everyone to be included in projects and the school council. The school has well developed

links with the local community and children benefit from the wider experiences this offers.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

| Standard | Action | Due date |
|----------|--------|----------|
|----------|--------|----------|

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- review and update the policy and written guidance for administering medication so that it meets current best practice (NMS 14)



- ensure that records of sanctions include the effectiveness of the sanction and that sanctions are monitored twice a term (NMS 10)
- ensure that recruitment records meet the requirements of NMS 27.2 and that staff do not begin work prior to the school obtaining a satisfactory CRB check (NMS 27)