

Breckenbrough School Limited

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Simon Morley
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 18 years old, who all have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of boys are diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, some have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and mild learning disabilities.

The school caters for up to 42 pupils, with provision for 30 boarders. The curriculum is based on the national curriculum, with a wide range of 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 with a separate annex for upper sixth boarders. All pupils have their own bedrooms and share lounges and bathroom facilities. The school provides all meals though there is provision for semi-independent living in the sixth form. There are a range of facilities, including a motor-cross track and a fruit and vegetable garden. There is ample parking space for visitors.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection, covering all the outcome areas and key national minimum standards, carried out at short notice.

Outcomes for pupils are good with some outstanding elements and five recommendations for improvement. Health of pupils is promoted well with outstanding practice in regards to supporting pupils with emotional health. The rigour in encouraging healthy diets is not as consistent though. Pupils safety is well protected and there is excellent work based on Quaker values in enabling pupils to develop, mature and take responsibility for their behaviour. Support for pupils to enjoy their time at the school and make realistic achievements is outstanding. There are good opportunities to learn life skills and develop independence, preparing pupils for life when they leave the school. The quality of boarding accommodation varies and the main shower room used by the majority of boarders requires improvement. Overall management of the school is good and has improved since the last inspection helping to drive a culture of continuous improvement and bring best practice into the school. This is reflected in the good and outstanding outcomes pupils experience at the school. There were some identified shortfalls in internal monitoring.

As a result of this inspection five good practice recommendations are made with respect to: a consistent and more effective approach to healthy eating; improved shower facilities; better records of fire drills; consistent tracking of pupil progress in relation to their care plans; and an assessment of compliance with national minimum standards.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no good practice recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The arrangements for health promotion contribute towards good healthy outcomes for pupils at the school. Though a recommendation is made to improve the promotion of healthy eating, other aspects of health promotion are good and outstanding leading to an overall judgement of good.

Pupil's health needs are identified and assessed as far as possible as part of the admission process and are then regularly monitored and reviewed. This is enhanced by the role of the school psychologist and home visits which help to gather more information in particular with regard to the psychological and emotional health of pupils. Such key information is used very effectively within the school's nurturing environment to promote and safeguard the emotional health and stability of pupils. This is a notable strength of the school.

The school works closely with parents, to ensure that pupils have regular health checks and attend any medical appointments. Though parents retain full responsibility for their children's health care they are well supported by the school. Pupils learn about health care issues at school and know how to have healthy lifestyles. Physical health is promoted well and pupils receive good support to access a range of health services for treatment or guidance depending on their individual needs. The amount of smoking behaviour has reduced and smoking is not allowed in any part of the school or grounds. Staff are trained in first aid in the event of any accidents and there are good, safe procedures for ensuring pupils get any necessary medication.

Pupils are able to contribute to the school menus and have plenty of opportunity to learn how to be independent in planning and cooking their own meals. Meals provided by the school are of good quality with plenty of choice. Some options are more healthy and nutritious than others. The range of food caters to pupils individual needs and preferences some of which stem from their Asperger's condition and backgrounds. While healthy eating is promoted the effectiveness and consistency in which this is done lacks rigour and some pupils may not be eating as healthy a diet as possible.

Pupils are provided with plenty of opportunities and encouragement to take part in

physical and sporting activities in line with their own individual interests to help keep fit and healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is very good practice with regards to safeguarding pupils' welfare. This is firmly rooted in the ethos and values of the school. There is a strong emphasis on the promotion of the well-being of pupils so that they are able to achieve and progress with their education.

There is a good, effective, professional and caring approach to safeguarding practice that ensures pupils are protected from abuse. Any allegations or concerns about abuse are managed very well and there are well-developed relationships with other agencies providing an open and integrated approach to promoting pupils' welfare.

There is a sensitive and nurturing, person-centred ethos to help pupils develop and flourish. Care practice helps keep pupils free from bullying and promotes a calm, relaxed and settled atmosphere. Staff explore and develop positive strategies for supporting pupils with challenging behaviour which reflect their individual needs and backgrounds. There are firm but fair boundaries, expectations of acceptable behaviour are clear and institutional interventions are avoided. This area of practice is another notable strength of the school.

Pupils say they feel safe and that staff are good at listening to them. Pupils know how to complain should they want to and they get very good responses, feel listened to and taken seriously. Pupils benefit from having their privacy respected and personal information about them is kept safe and secure.

There are strict procedures for the recruitment of new staff to make sure only suitable staff are employed at the school. There is good management of health and safety and the school provides a safe, secure physical environment. There was one minor shortfall in relation to consistent recording of fire drills. On this occasion this was not judged to have an impact on pupils' safety but it does make it harder to monitor the outcome of this safety practice and identify any necessary improvements. However in this respect the school are in the process of changing the assembly point to a safer location.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit from the hard work and commitment of staff that provides them with outstanding levels of support. This is underpinned by an excellent approach to promoting pupil well-being, helping pupils resolve their emotional difficulties and to manage their own behaviour. This is reflected in typical comments from

stakeholders, 'pupils love the school, their confidence grows, they are well cared for and respected by staff, recognition of their talents and support of their difficulties helps significantly, the school provides great support and encouragement'.

There is an excellent whole school approach to supporting pupils with their development, through the integration of boarding and teaching staff and commitment to the school ethos and values. There is a strong, inclusive ethos and very good links with the local and wider community including colleges, cadets and youth clubs. All pupils have opportunities to be involved in a range of school projects, activities, fund raising and work experience. This all goes toward helping pupils develop their social skills, and improve their confidence and self-esteem.

Support for pupils is based on their individually assessed needs, circumstances and backgrounds. This provides pupils with excellent outcomes and opportunities to live out their chosen lifestyles and follow their hobbies and interests. This is reflected in very positive comments from pupils who frequently comment that one of the best things about the school is the range of activities on offer. Social activities are diverse in nature reflecting the needs and wishes of all pupils.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are good outcomes and opportunities for pupils to contribute positively to their development, decisions about their lives and the running of the school. This is founded in the excellent relationships staff build up with individual pupils which is another notable strength of the school. Staff are motivated and genuinely care about the welfare and achievements of pupils.

Admissions to the school are planned involving prospective pupils and their families. Pupils may visit the school, stay overnight and give it a test drive before they move in. Their needs are assessed before admission helping to ensure the school is the right place for the pupil to move to. As such pupils are able to move into the school in a planned and sensitive manner. Careful consideration is also given to ensure that new pupils being admitted will not have an adverse impact on pupils already at the school. This helps ensure good outcomes for all pupils are maintained.

There is good communication with parents about pupils' welfare and progress. Pupils are able to regularly visit home and keep in contact with friends and family while boarding. Families are also welcome to visit pupils at school.

Pupils' needs continue to be assessed and reviewed after admission. Staff strive to obtain all relevant information about a pupil which is then used to develop a care plan of how individual pupils are supported at school. These plans detail the support a pupil will receive based on their needs, backgrounds and potential risks to their welfare. This includes any specific needs based on culture, religion and disability. Pupils are involved in developing their care plan and have plenty of one-to-one time

with staff to talk about their achievements and any anxieties. The process of assessment and care planning has improved since the last inspection providing a better account of pupils' needs and areas for development. The monitoring of pupil progress in relation to their plans is not yet consistently rigorous to fully ensure all pupils are getting the right level of support.

There is good practice with regards to the participation, consultation and inclusion of pupils in their welfare, care and management of the school. This is central to the person-centred ethos and values in which care practice is firmly based. Pupils are included in assessing their own abilities and setting targets for personal and social development. On a wider scale the school council meets regularly and contributes to decisions about the running of the school. Pupils are asked their views about spending priorities and information is shared with them regarding school income and expenditure to help them make informed decisions. Pupils views are listened to by the school and they are able to affect change in the organisation and structure of daily school life for example: rules about school uniform; and the dining arrangements at mealtimes.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pupils benefit well from the support and arrangements to help them develop independent living skills and prepare for the transition to adulthood. The school now has a sixth form provision and a range of accommodation promoting semi-independent living. This enable pupils to stay at the school for longer and develop a range of life skills. Pupils are supported to budget, shop, cook meals and do their laundry. There are links with the local and wider community including a range of work experience opportunities and career guidance linked to pupils individual needs. All round there is a positive impact for pupils with good opportunities to develop new life skills again boosting their confidence and self-esteem.

There is a commitment to providing a homely atmosphere and high standards of furniture and décor in the boarding accommodation. Some areas of boarding accommodation are of a high standard but this is not consistent throughout. In particular bathing facilities and hot water supply for boarders in Years 9, 10 and 11 is not of a good standard. This was frequently commented on by pupils as an aspect of boarding that they would like improved. This issue is acknowledged by the management team and there are plans for improvement. Pupils benefit from a wide range of facilities at the school including large outdoor playing areas, a motor-cross track, pool and snooker room. Sixth formers have their own kitchen and younger pupils can use a different kitchen to practice their cooking skills.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is good management of the boarding provision and care of pupils who board at the school. Boarding is run in the best interests of the pupils who live at the school and provides them with good and excellent outcomes.

There are monitoring and quality assurance systems in place which are under review to develop a better culture of evidence-based and reflective practice. Governors play a key role in monitoring the quality of boarding provision and the welfare and safety of pupils. They visit frequently and provide written reports to the governing body about the school. Senior managers also provide reports about the quality of boarding provision. Some shortfalls were highlighted during the inspection with regard to internal monitoring. These are in relation to records of fire drills, monitoring of pupil progress in relation to their care plans and an assessment of compliance with the national minimum standards. Overall though the management systems in place ensure pupils benefit from a well run school. This is underpinned by a detailed plan to drive continuous improvement both in the short and long term helping contribute to improving the outcomes for pupils. Pupils and staff are included in this process and their ideas are used for improving the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good overall. Pupils receive excellent support that reflects their needs, backgrounds and individuality. Pupils learn about other cultures and issues of equality. Records are generally in good order and reflect the individuality of pupils and show their needs, how they are supported, their achievements and development. Though there are a few shortfalls in care practice on balance the quality of individual support and outcomes pupils experience supports a good judgement for promoting diversity.

There is a competent and experienced staff group with clear deputising arrangements. The care staff team has been re-structured since the last inspection providing a more effective system of management and better care for pupils. There are good staffing levels to support pupils with all their care needs. Most staff have the recommended qualification to care for children and young people, other staff are working towards achieving this. Staff are suitably trained to ensure that they look after pupils well and that the school lives up to its aims and objectives. Aims and objectives are detailed in the school prospectus. This gives good clear information about the school and what it provides. It is available to pupils, their parents and placing authorities.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure all children are provided with wholesome and nutritious diets (NMS 15.1)
- ensure there are thorough records of all fire drills both planned and unplanned (NMS 26.6)
- ensure that all pupils progress is monitored half termly in relation to their individual care plans (NMS 17.1)
- ensure that all bathing and toilet facilities are of a good standard and there is an adequate supply of hot water (NMS 25.1)
- ensure the annual review of boarding provision includes an assessment of compliance with the national minimum standards. (NMS 32.4)