

# Bracken School

Independent school standard inspection report

---

DfE registration number	888/6112
Unique Reference Number (URN)	136050
Inspection number	366859
Inspection dates	07-08 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2011



## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Bracken School is a member of the Keys Care group of schools. It is a small education unit for up to five students aged from 11 to 16 years of age who have emotional, behavioural or social difficulties. The young people are all in the care of local authorities and live in a small adjacent children's home run by the group. There are currently three students on roll, all girls, who are aged 14 and 15 years. One of these students has a statement of special educational needs.

As a consequence of their challenging behaviour and difficulties in the past, students' education has typically been disrupted prior to joining the school. The school aims to re-engage the students in learning and to help them to achieve, through a therapeutic approach to their difficulties. The school's mission statement is: 'Providing a positive, safe and nurturing environment where every child can reach their potential.'

The school opened in January 2010 and this is its first full inspection. A separate report on the residential provision can be obtained on application to Ofsted. The last full inspection of the residential provision was made in January 2011.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The quality of education is satisfactory. The school fulfils its stated aims. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are good. They develop more positive attitudes to school and learn to manage their behaviour better. As a result, students make satisfactory progress in their learning. The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. Policies and procedures for safeguarding students are robust. The school meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets all the regulations. The school offers an holistic education that helps students to conduct themselves in 'a socially acceptable way'. The curriculum follows the National Curriculum and is supported by suitable schemes of work for each subject to meet students' needs. Appropriate emphasis is

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

placed on developing students' basic skills in mathematics and English. Learning is accredited through GCSE, Association of Qualifications Alliance units (AQA), and through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). As yet, the range of choices of accredited courses and qualifications on offer is limited, but the school is actively seeking to increase this provision.

The curriculum is continuing to develop. For example, students have begun to study vocational courses such as hairdressing and beauty and car mechanics part-time at a local further education college and undertake a work-experience placement. In this way the school helps to prepare students for employment. The school additionally helps to prepare them for living independently through life-skills lessons, which involve budgeting, shopping and cooking. Plans for further improvement include a review of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship curriculum.

Curriculum planning does not fully take into account the need for continuity of study for some students who are off-site on work-related learning for two days per week. Individual students do not readily pick up learning from where they left off, and the system does not ensure that they always move on at the right pace.

Students make some use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the subjects, for example to research a topic of interest, but their ICT skills are not being systematically developed to a higher level. Students attend a local gym on a weekly basis. This provides a regular, but limited, opportunity for exercise and contributes towards students' understanding of a healthy lifestyle. This awareness is reinforced through the PSHE programme which covers topics related to safety and health, such as the risks related to alcohol, illegal drugs and smoking, and education about sex and relationships.

The school offers a programme of extra-curricular activities which reflect students' interests. These currently include swimming and singing. Visits out of school to places of interest and to the theatre are an increasing feature of the curriculum. The residential staff and the school staff do not work together as closely as they might to ensure that this programme is delivered well.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress in their learning. Small classes allow students to receive individual support and this helps to re-engage them in learning. Lessons are appropriately planned with suitable activities that engage students, although the range of resources is only just adequate. Staff use carefully stepped approaches to develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Lessons provide frequent opportunities for students to develop their skills in listening and speaking, for example, through reflecting on their responses. Students are encouraged to read for pleasure and regular spelling tests help to reinforce their literacy skills.

Students show an interest in their lessons, although the pace of learning varies depending on how well they stay focused on their work. Good relationships between

students and staff encourage students to learn. Staff are skilled at managing behaviour. They draw well on what students already know and can do and use good questioning techniques to check their understanding.

Assessment practices are satisfactory and are continuing to develop. Students' progress is formally assessed twice a year against National Curriculum levels in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school has recently decided to implement a system to monitor progress in lessons more regularly to note the steps in learning that students make. The school systematically tracks the progress of individual students in managing their own behaviour, with specific targets for this aspect. However, there is no similar system for setting targets for students' academic progress, linked to National Curriculum levels.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. The school places considerable emphasis on promoting students' social development and on developing their appreciation of the importance of strong moral values. Students' relationships with staff and with each other are good. As a result, students' self-confidence grows and they develop more positive attitudes to learning and to working cooperatively with others. The system of rewards for positive behaviour operates effectively to motivate students to try their best. Behaviour is good. Students say that their attendance has improved, as they enjoy school more. However, the school has no firm long-term data to prove that this is the case. Students' social development is further promoted through meeting with others of their own age at occasional social events held at a partner school within the Keys Care group, and through links with their local community.

Students learn about other cultures and religions through their lessons in religious education and through the PSHE programme, where tolerance and understanding of the viewpoints of others are fostered. This programme includes elements of education about citizenship. For example, students learn about their rights and responsibilities. The programme is increasingly supplemented by visits out of school, such as to the theatre, and by themed cultural evenings in the residential units. Staff have very recently begun a review of the programme for students' personal development, including how to create better links between the school and the residential elements to reinforce learning.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the students is good. This is underpinned by a wide range of up-to-date policies and procedures that are implemented effectively. These include checks on staff, risk assessments for school activities and visits, and measures for the prevention of fire. Records are mostly carefully kept.

Procedures to safeguard students' welfare are robust. Staff are trained at the required level in child protection procedures, including the designated officer. Physical restraint to control behaviour is used only as a last resort and records show that this procedure is rarely needed. Students are supervised closely, with a good balance between seeking to keep them safe and promoting their independence as they grow up. Students learn about keeping safe and how to live a healthy lifestyle through the PSHE programme. Nevertheless, students choose to continue to smoke. Staff carefully monitor where and when they may do so. Life skills lessons include learning to cook healthy meals on a budget. The school works closely with outside agencies and professionals to support students. A high priority is given to promoting students' emotional well-being. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, with a suitable plan to increase accessibility.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school meets all the requirements regarding the suitability of staff. Recruitment procedures are thorough. The school conducts all the required checks on staff and records these in a single, central register as the regulations demand.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The premises are adequate and safe. There is one classroom, but there are no specialist facilities for physical education, technology or science. The classroom has three computers. Food technology lessons are held in the kitchen on site. The outside space for play is adequate with a small hard-play area and a garden. The premises are clean and tidy and meet all the regulations.

### **Provision of information**

The school provides all the information required for parents, carers and others. Most of this is contained in a prospectus for parents, together with a booklet for students. Parents and carers receive a termly report giving details of their children's academic progress, effort and behaviour. As yet, these reports do not indicate the National Curriculum levels students are attaining in each subject. A website gives details of the company's philosophy for its schools and residential units.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's policy and procedures for complaints meet all the requirements.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home.

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

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- implement fully the assessment system to record students' progress more regularly and include more specific and measurable academic targets in students' individual education plans
- further develop the curriculum to:
  - provide additional opportunities for students to gain accreditation for their learning
  - introduce a programme to develop students' ICT skills
  - improve the coordination of the school's planning for lessons and for activities off-site with the residence to better reinforce learning
  - respond to students' differing patterns of attendance in lessons, with greater personalisation of the curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

### The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			✓	

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
--	--	---	--	--



## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Children's home with education		
<b>Date school opened</b>	November 2009		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-16 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 3	Total: 3
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 3	Total: 3
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£32,000		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 631531		
<b>Email address</b>	Pauladdison@keyschildcare.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Addison		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Keys Childcare		