



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Breckenbrough School

**Breckenbrough
Thirsk
North Yorkshire
YO7 4EN**

Lead Inspector
Marcia Mackey

Announced Inspection
7th December 2005 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life.

Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of school Breckenbrough School

Address Breckenbrough
Thirsk
North Yorkshire
YO7 4EN

Telephone number 01845 587238

Fax number

Email address

Provider Web address

**Name of Governing body,
Person or Authority
responsible for the
school** Mr Quentin Fowler

Name of Head Mr Trevor Bennett

Name of Head of Care Mr Stuart Edwards

**Age range of residential
pupils** 9-17years

**Date of last welfare
inspection** 16th November 2004

Brief Description of the School:

Breckenbrough is a Residential Special School for boys aged 9-17years who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (including Aspergers, autistic spectrum disorders and ADHD) and are subject to a statement of special educational needs. Pupils are generally of above-average intellectual potential but have difficulty in achieving this potential in a mainstream school setting.

The school is a Victorian building set in extensive grounds within open countryside and near to Thirsk, Ripon and Northallerton. Residential accommodation is located on the two upper floors of the main school building and all boys have their own room with shared bathroom facilities.

The school is owned and managed by the Society of Friends (Quakers) and is a non-profit charitable trust.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place over a period of 2 days and took 20 hours, including preparation time. Prior to the inspection, questionnaires were sent to all residential pupils, parents, placing officers and staff the results of which influenced the focus of the inspection. Interviews were held with the Headmaster, Deputy Head, the Head of Care, all care staff and the ancillary team. In addition, inspectors gave all residential pupils an opportunity to discuss their views about school life. Documentation was inspected, including key policies and procedures and the school's recruitment files. Inspectors were also able to join staff and young people for meals during the inspection and were able to observe both evening and early morning routines and activities.

The inspectors would like to thank all the pupils and staff at the school for their hospitality and assistance during the inspection.

What the school does well:

Breckenbrough is a well-run school where staff pupil relationships are very positive. The atmosphere within the school is relaxed and friendly and pupils report that the school is 'brilliant' and that 'staff treat you really well'. Staff have a good understanding of the educational and emotional / behavioural needs of the boys in their care and are able to effectively manage problematic behaviour with the minimum use of sanctions. The school offers a wide range of enjoyable and challenging activities and there is a high ratio of staff to pupils at all times.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has improved the way in which it records the use of sanctions, which are now monitored regularly by the governing body in order to address any emerging trends.

The majority of staff have now gained, or are in the process of gaining, appropriate professional qualifications in caring for children and young people.

Pupils are encouraged to read and sign records held about them.

The school continues its programme of redecoration and improvements to living accommodation.

What they could do better:

Further improvements to the school's recruitment procedures are needed to ensure that all necessary information about employees is held on file.

The school should ensure that all pupils who smoke have the permission of their parents or that parents are made aware of this issue.

The school should ensure that all safety devices are in good working order.

The school should gain parental permission for boys to visit the homes of staff members.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted.(NMS 14)
- Children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.(NMS 15)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14 and 15

The school promotes a healthy lifestyle but does not consistently communicate sufficient information to parents regarding children's health.

EVIDENCE:

The school offers a wide variety of healthy and nutritious food and there is fresh fruit and drinking water available at all times. Boys with particular dietary needs are able to be catered for and a record is maintained of any food allergies. Some children observed during the inspection ate very little or a limited range of food: the Head of Care is aware of these children and monitors eating patterns appropriately. The Head Cook is flexible in her approach and boys are able to make suggestions for menu changes, which are responded to.

Records contain information regarding health needs and include a record of allergies and any special requirements. Boys are registered with a local GP and Dentist and are taken to appointments by staff during term time. Boys are able to see a GP alone if they wish. The school maintains records of all health checks and any visits to health professionals and has obtained permission from parents for the administration of medications and first aid treatment as well as for other interventions necessary. Files also contain risk assessments regarding potentially harmful behaviour (including self-harm) and these have been developed in conjunction with the placing authorities. This is good practice.

The school operates an effective system for the storage, administration and disposal of medications although the lead member of staff for medications would benefit from further training to consolidate his role. The school should also consider inviting a Pharmacist to the school in order to inspect their procedures and ensure best practice.

Boys are able to smoke in an area outside of the main school building although they are discouraged from smoking via P.H.S.E lessons and health education advice from care staff. However, some boys' parents have not given permission for this practice and in future the school should ensure that parents are informed of all behaviours which are likely to impact on their child's health.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.(NMS 3)
- Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration.(NMS 4)
- The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.(NMS 5)
- Children are protected from bullying by others.(NMS 6)
- All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.(NMS 7)
- Children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return.(NMS 8)
- Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour.(NMS 10)
- Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security.(NMS 26)
- There is careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.(NMS 27)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

3,4,5,6,7,8,10,26 and 27

The school is highly effective in encouraging positive behaviour and in managing child-protection issues. However, records do not demonstrate sufficiently robust recruitment practices.

EVIDENCE:

All staff sign the school's Behaviour Management Policy which outlines appropriate responses to challenging behaviour. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention but reported that instances of this are 'rare': this was confirmed by an examination of incident records held by the school. The school's ethos focuses on developing respect and trust between young people and staff and this approach is seen to pre-empt negative behaviour. Where boys' behaviour does fall below expected standards, staff use de-escalation

and distraction techniques: this approach was confirmed by pupils who felt that they were encouraged by staff to reflect on the reasons for their behaviour. The school operates a system of positive rewards and incentives and boys are able to earn money for undertaking small tasks such as laundry collection. Staff are able to administer 'fines' for deliberate damage, but this sanction is used rarely and involves a token payment rather than the full cost of any item broken.

Boys did not report physical bullying as an issue within the school although a degree of verbal bullying does take place. Staff are aware of bullying issues and ensure that the needs of both 'bully' and 'victim' are addressed by any action taken. Inspectors observed staff discussions relating to this issue which dealt appropriately with bullying concerns between pupils.

The school has appointed a designated Health and Safety Officer (HSO) who has undertaken appropriate training and is involved in regularly monitoring the physical safety of the school environment. Monitoring includes a regular inspection of all areas of the building from which a schedule of works is planned. Currently, window restrictors in some bedrooms are broken and these are scheduled to be repaired. Risk assessments have been developed for all activities including high-risk pursuits such as canoeing and climbing: the school employs two members of staff who have expertise in this area and they have been involved in developing risk assessments for these activities.

The school has a complaints procedure and all boys are informed of ways in which they can make an informal or formal complaint. The majority of complaints are dealt with informally, and pupils and staff regarded this as a satisfactory arrangement. There were no recorded complaints by parents or placing officers and questionnaire results received by the inspectors indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school.

All staff employed by the school, including school governors, have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks although the school should ensure that all contract workers have also have CRB checks in instances where they may have unsupervised access to boys' accommodation. In addition, recruitment files did not contain all required documentation including written references, evidence of telephone checks to previous employers and photo ID. The school has taken immediate action to address these issues.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school.(NMS 12)
- Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community.(NMS 13)
- Children receive individual support when they need it.(NMS 22)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

12,13 and 22

Individual support for pupils is very good: the school supports children in achieving their academic potential as well as enabling them to take part in enjoyable leisure activities.

EVIDENCE:

Care staff are actively involved in pupils' education and accompany boys into the classroom to offer individual assistance and support where this is needed. Boys perform well at the school and are able to achieve their full academic potential due to intensive support and small class sizes.

Extra-curricular activities include in-house activities such as board games, computer games and DVDs as well as outdoor games such as roller-blading and skating. There is also an outdoor play area which includes swings, rope ladders and other wooden climbing equipment for younger boys. During the inspection, boys were seen engaging in a variety of these activities as well as taking part in rehearsals for the Christmas Play. External events also take place including swimming and cycling and 'higher-risk' activities such as climbing, canoeing, motor-biking and paragliding.

The individual support to pupils is very good. Inspectors were able to observe staff handover in which the individual needs of boys were discussed in planning for the day's lessons and activities: staff demonstrated a holistic approach to pupils, focussing not only on the school environment but on external factors such as family relationships or significant events which may have impacted on behaviour. Boys reported being able to talk to all members of staff about worries or concerns and reported that 'the staff treat you well'.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. No child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views.(NMS 2)
- Children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect.(NMS 9)
- Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes.(NMS 11)
- Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school.(NMS 17)
- In accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while living away from home at school.(NMS 20)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

2,9,11,17 and 20

Children have very good relationships with staff, are consulted about all aspects of school life and are encouraged and enabled to maintain contact with family and friends. However, the school should review the practice of pupils visiting staff's homes.

EVIDENCE:

The positive interpersonal relationships between staff and pupils is an area of strength within the school. Interactions observed were relaxed and friendly with pupils referring to staff on first name terms and engaging in discussions on a range of issues. The school operates a pupil council although, in practice, this does not meet regularly. If boys wish to make comments and suggestions regarding school life, these are made directly to staff members. This informal approach is approved of by both pupils and staff: boys spoken to during the inspection reported feeling that their views were 'listened to' and were regarded as 'important'; they were able to identify changes which had taken place as a result of comments they had made and felt that there was always someone available to listen to their suggestions. However, more formalised and regular council meeting would enable pupils to have a collective approach to addressing issues which may be of benefit for newer boys in particular. New admissions to the school are provided with a comprehensive Induction Pack, which is tailored to their individual needs. Many children are homesick

when first admitted to the school and all boys are able to call home whenever they wish via use of the school telephone. New boys are teamed up with a member of their peer group for as long as they feel this is helpful and this supports them through the early stages of induction to the school.

On some occasions, boys are invited to the homes of staff members for Sunday lunch or, for example, to summer barbeques. A discussion was held with the Headmaster and Head of Care regarding this issue and it was recommended that the consent of parents is obtained prior to any such visit and that any adults likely to be present at the staff member's home have been CRB checked.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money.(NMS 16)
- Children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living.(NMS 21)
- Children live in well designed and pleasant premises, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.(NMS 23)
- Children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use.(NMS 24)
- Children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity.(NMS 25)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

21,23,24 and 25

The school provides sufficient living space and privacy for boys: the rolling programme of redecoration is improving bedrooms and communal spaces.

EVIDENCE:

All boys are provided with an individual room, most of which are spacious. Rooms are well heated and ventilated and boys have the furniture they require for storage of personal requisites and clothing. Boys are happy with their accommodation and feel that they are able to have sufficient privacy in bedroom and bathroom areas. Some bedrooms were in the process of being redecorated and this process should be continued and extended to the corridor and landing areas of the accommodation as well as to the doors and door frames which were in need of repair.

For boys who are leaving the school, preparations are made early for their transition: this involves a care review, involving parents, and a discussion with boys regarding strategies 'to help them deal with the reality of their own specific circumstances'. The school has an Aftercare Committee and an appointed Aftercare Officer who is a former staff member. The Aftercare officer is involved in all care reviews which take place in years 10 and 11 and has adapted an assessment for boys who are about to leave care which is based upon a simplified version of the Looked After Children's Leaving Care

Assessment and is applied to boys in their final years at the school. The Aftercare system is intended to improve and support the transition between school and the next placement or independent living arrangement. Boys are able to stay in contact with the school for as long as they wish and there is an Annual Reunion on sports day with a significant number of ex pupils still maintaining contact.

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils.(NMS 1)
- Children's needs, development and progress is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.(NMS 18)
- There are adequate records of both the staff and child groups of the school.(NMS 19)
- Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently.(NMS 28)
- Children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs.(NMS 29)
- Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare.(NMS 30)
- Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff.(NMS 31)
- Children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools.(NMS 32)
- The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school.(NMS 33)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

28,29,30,31,32 and 33

Breckenbrough is a well-managed and well-run school with an effective and knowledgeable care team which is committed to professional development.

EVIDENCE:

There is effective leadership of the care team by the Head of Care who has attained relevant qualifications for the post and is currently undertaking a Diploma in Social Work. Staff are encouraged and enabled to gain professional qualifications and are motivated to do so. The school has made links with another Residential Special School in the region which is an NVQ centre and this has been helpful in ensuring that all staff are enrolled on appropriate professional courses. In addition, the school has 'bought in' an NVQ assessor who works alongside the care team one evening a week in order to assist with NVQ3 qualifications. The Head of Care has identified further training which will be accessed by the care team on an ongoing basis including 'Supervision for

Supervisees' which will enable staff to get the most out of supervision. Staff receive sufficient supervision with sessions taking place: however, these generally undertaken on an ad hoc basis rather than being formally pre-arranged. Staff are satisfied with this arrangement but it may be beneficial to them if sessions are booked in advance in order to ensure that they are able to update regularly on progress and developments.

All staff spoken to during the inspection, including teachers, care staff and the ancillary team feel that communication in the school is effective and that there are clear lines of accountability. The Headmaster and the Head of Care regularly monitor the operation of the school via key records and, in addition, the Headmaster meets with the Governors at appropriate intervals to report on the progress of the school. A representative of the governing body visits the school each half term and completes a written report: examples of these reports were examined by the inspection team and were seen to cover all necessary areas of the school's operation.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

“X” in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

“N/A” in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
Standard No	Score
14	2
15	3

STAYING SAFE	
Standard No	Score
3	3
4	3
5	3
6	3
7	3
8	3
10	3
26	3
27	2

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
Standard No	Score
12	3
13	3
22	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
Standard No	Score
2	3
9	2
11	3
17	3
20	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
Standard No	Score
16	3
21	3
23	3
24	2
25	3

MANAGEMENT	
Standard No	Score
1	X
18	3
19	X
28	3
29	3
30	3
31	3
32	3
33	3

YES

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)
1	14	The school should inform parents about issues relating to their children's health.	01/01/06
2	27.2	Recruitment files should contain required documentation. All contract staff should be subject to CRB checks if they are likely to have unsupervised contact with pupils.	01/01/06
3	9.1	Relationships between staff and pupils should be based on clear professional and personal boundaries. The team should discuss the practice of inviting pupils to staff homes.	01/01/06
4	24	The school should ensure that window restrictors are in good working order.	01/01/06

Commission for Social Care Inspection

York Area Office

Unit 4

Triune Court

Monk's Cross

York

YO32 9GZ

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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