

# inspection report

# RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

**Breckenbrough School** 

Breckenbrough Thirsk North Yorkshire YO7 4EN

Lead Inspector lan Milner

Key Announced Inspection 28th February 2007 09:30 am

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 <a href="https://www.dh.gov.uk">www.dh.gov.uk</a> or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: <a href="https://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop">www.tso.co.uk/bookshop</a>

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

Society of Friends (Quaker)

Chair of Governors Mr Quentin Fowler

Name of Head Mr Trevor Bennett

Name of Head of Care Mr Stuart Edwards

Age range of residential

pupils

9 – 17 years

Date of last welfare

inspection

7<sup>th</sup> December 2005

#### **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 inspector went to the school on the morning of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007 by arrangement. He spent two days in the school and spoke with a number of the day pupils and those who were boarders.

#### He also:

- Spoke with a number of the staff,
- Looked at some files,
- Watched how the pupils and staff got along together.

To help the inspector write the report the Head Teacher, Trevor, sent the inspector information about the school. Trevor also wrote to the inspector and told him what he thought the school did well and what they could improve. The inspector also used other information that he already knew about the school.

If you want to get a full picture of what it is like to be a pupil at Breckenbrough you might like to read the last report as well. You can ask the inspector for a copy.

#### What the school does well:

These are some of the good things the inspector found out about the school:

- The school offers a wide range of enjoyable activities
- The atmosphere in school is relaxed and friendly
- Boys said that the staff were 'great', that the staff were 'brilliant' and 'treat you really well'.
- Staff manage problem behaviour with the minimum use of sanctions
- There are good staff numbers to help and support pupils at all times.

## What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has continued to redecorate and improve pupils' bedrooms and areas where pupils spend leisure time. There are more computers for pupils to use than ever. Visits to staff homes are now better controlled to protect pupils from possible abuse. All contractors working in school are now vetted to further protect pupils from possible abuse.

### What they could do better:

Although the school did many things well there were things that could make young people safer. The important ones are:

- Re-introducing the School Council to ensure that pupils' opinions are heard in a more formal way,
- Ensuring that all placing officers know about the complaints procedure so that pupils' complaints can be addressed quickly,
- Considering whether the admission process could be made even better if school staff visited possible new pupils at home to meet their families.

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

The report of this inspection is available from <a href="mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk">enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk</a> or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

#### **CONTENTS**

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Staying Safe

**Enjoying and Achieving** 

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Recommended Actions identified during the inspection

## **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)

The Commission considers Standard 14 the key standard to be inspected.

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

14 and 15.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The school promotes a healthy lifestyle and ensures that the health and care needs of pupils are met.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

School mealtimes were pleasant occasions with plenty of discussion about activities. Food was plentiful, hot and nutritious with a good range of choice. In addition to meat dishes there were vegetarian options, together with salad, pasta, fresh fruit and yoghurts. There was fruit juice and drinking water readily available. Staff took careful note of any young person not eating or eating only particular foods. This information was passed to individual boys' keyworkers. Dietary needs were catered for and suggestions from young people about menu changes were listened to and acted upon wherever practicable.

None of the current pupils was self-medicating and prescribed medication was retained centrally in a double-locked cabinet in a locked room. Medication records were up to date and were readily reconcilable with the medication in the locked cabinet which included proprietary medicines. The identified lead member of staff concerned with medication had completed a Certificate in the Handling and Storage of Medicines since the last inspection.

Medication records have been computerised and comprehensive, and contained records of health centre/hospital visits together with individual assessments of health risks posed by particular boys, including self-harm. The computerisation allowed a number of analytical monitoring checks to be run on the control and issue of medication on a weekly basis.

Most boys retained their registration with their home GP although a small number were registered with a local GP. The local health centre retained an interest in the health needs of boys at the school. Boys were able to see a GP alone if they so wished.

A number of boys smoke and arrangements are in place for them to smoke outside the main building. Smoking is actively discouraged via school lessons and individual key worker/pupil meetings. Health education material is available around the school and residential units and help is readily offered if a boy wants to stop smoking. Parental agreement/permission is sought for boys who smoke, and a number of boys spoken to said that the school's insistence on parental knowledge/agreement had helped them either not to smoke or to stop.

There was good file evidence that following the last inspection measures were reviewed and strengthened to ensure that parent/carer agreement was obtained to all medication and probable medical procedures. There was also good evidence that parents were told quickly by telephone whenever there was an accident or a medical or health issue or problem. Individual case files contained health plans which were updated in collaboration with parents and the placing authority.

## 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)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

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

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

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The school excels at encouraging positive behaviour and in ensuring the safety and security of pupils. Personnel records showed that appropriate vetting measures are taken to protect young people from possible abuse.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

Boys said that they had considerable privacy and staff were observed knocking on bedroom doors before entering. Rooms were locked with boys having their own keys. Information about boys is kept confidential — individual case files are kept in locked cabinets in the main office and computerised information is suitably password protected. Health information is also password protected with any manual files kept in locked offices. Mail is given to boys unopened — if there is a particular problem associated with home or other contact staff will offer to stay with the boy while mail is opened and read.

The school has a Behaviour Management Policy which all staff read and sign. The Policy sets out appropriate responses to challenging behaviour. There is record of staff training in physical intervention but its use is rare. Records show only seven restraint episodes since the last inspection, four of which involved the same boy who is no longer in the school. The overriding approach is the development of respect and trust between staff and boys which is seen to reduce negative behaviour. Staff use de-escalation and distraction techniques. Boys spoken to said that staff did use sanctions but they were generally fair and involved reflective discussion with staff about why the sanctions had been imposed. The most used sanction was loss of privileges such as shorter time for television and computer usage. Relationships between staff and boys were seen to be of good quality and some excellent interactions were observed.

Boys' access to computers and the internet was impressive. The school was well aware of the obvious dangers and had a very sophisticated monitoring system. This allowed staff to check continuously what was being accessed and by whom. It was possible to block inappropriate sites before and during computer use.

Boys spoken to said that from time to time bullying could and did occur but it was quickly and effectively dealt with by staff who ensured that the needs of both bully and victim were addressed. During the staff handover meeting the inspector witnessed staff discussion about strategies needed to deal with one particular young person who was attempting to bully younger boys and was being abusive to staff members. An interim plan to relocate him in the sleeping accommodation and to curtail some of his privileges, together with some individual work with staff, was agreed.

The school has a policy for dealing with young people who are absent without authority. The policy addresses the process for dealing with their return to school and how it should be handled. Parents and placing authorities would be kept fully informed. This has not been a major problem for the school recently since there were very few recorded episodes and none since the last inspection.

A member of teaching staff is the designated Health and Safety Officer (HSO). He has undertaken appropriate training and has ready access to an on-line consultancy providing H&S advice and guidance plus templates for individual risk assessments. The wide range of activities in the school and outside are all subject to risk assessments which are stored on computer. Staff with specific qualification in outside activities assist in their creation and updating.

Part of the HSO's role includes a regular inspection of the school buildings from which a schedule and programme of works is created. At the last inspection a problem with broken and missing window restrictors was identified. Many of those windows have now been replaced by double glazed units which has added to security and to comfort. Those windows not yet replaced had properly secured restrictors on the day of the inspection.

The school has a complaints procedure which is widely available through the school. Information about it is part of the school's welcome pack for new pupils and parents. Boys spoken to said they knew how to complain and would readily go to staff if they had a problem. Parents who returned pre-inspection questionnaires said that they knew of the complaints procedure, and how to complain. Of note was that of the ten placing officers who returned pre inspection questionnaires six said they had no information about the complaints procedure. Since the last inspection there had been no recorded complaints.

At the last inspection a problem was identified with contractors not having CRB checks and with the quality of documentation on personnel files. A sample of personnel files was examined and there was now evidence of CRB clearance for contract workers employed within school. Personnel files examined were orderly with recruitment, training and employment information in discrete sections of the files. There was evidence of recruitment, interviews, references and CRB clearances. There was no written evidence on files of references being verified although the Head Teacher asserted that this was his practice. He was reminded that good practice suggested that the files should contain evidence that this check had been made.

## **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)

The Commission considers Standards 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

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

12, 13 and 22.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Individual support for young people is very good. Education and care staff work well together to help young people to achieve their academic potential and to enjoy a wide range of purposeful leisure activities.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

The last Ofsted inspection report (May 2006) said that 'Achievement is good overall because of good teaching'. There was also Ofsted recognition that care and teaching staffs are working towards the same goals. Care staff are actively involved in the boys' education and go into classrooms with boys to offer individual assistance and support where it is needed. Boys achieve well at the school and those boys spoken to were proud of the range of certificates they had for both educational and vocational achievements.

The range of extra-curricular activities is impressive. In school there is wide use of computer time and internet availability, subject to the monitoring described earlier. There are computer and electronic games, board games and DVD's, although many of the boys have TV, DVD players and music

systems in their rooms. The school has a gymnasium, and there is a well-equipped art room and photographic darkroom. School corridors display young people's art/photography work.

Outside there are roller-blading and skateboarding facilities, together with the proper safety equipment, and an outdoor play area for younger boys. Trips to local swimming baths are organised. With parental agreement, boys can take part in cycling, climbing, canoeing, motor biking, paragliding and flying as a passenger. At the time of the inspection boys had just competed in a Shakespeare competition in Leeds Playhouse. Links are maintained with local community vocational courses.

Individual support is very good. Boys have both a key worker and a personal mentor. The staff group includes a Pupil Counsellor and good links exist with local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Part of the observed staff handover meeting included discussions about boys' individual needs both in school and in dealing with problems associated with home, friends and family. Boys spoken to said readily that they would approach staff with problems of whatever sort. Staff spoken to said that much effort goes into maintaining links with boys' parents and in supplementing support parents may be having from local agencies by keeping information and communication about their sons alive.

## **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)

The Commission considers Standards 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

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

2,9,11,17 and 20.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Pupils have very good relationships with staff members and are consulted about all aspects of school life. Children are encouraged and enabled to maintain contact with family and friends.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

Relationships between staff and pupils were observed to be relaxed and friendly yet with a respect for boundaries and acceptable behaviour. Young people refer to staff by their first names and were observed in a number of good quality interactions about school, activities and current affairs. The staff group contained a wide range of experience and expertise and in those

interactions with young people staff were seen to draw on this to young people's benefit. For example, the teacher who acted as Health and Safety Officer was also a skilled photographer who showed boys how to take, develop and print photographs.

Boys spoken to were clear that their opinions were listened to and taken seriously. They offered examples of changes in menu and in timetabling that had come from their suggestions. There has previously been a School Council which boys spoken to said they would like re-started – for a number of reasons it had fallen into disuse. The Head of Care believed that the Council had a place in the school's life and in formalising issues for discussion.

The school admits boys from all over the country and new admissions are planned with introductory visits for boys, their parents and any linked professional staff. Because of the geographical spread of admissions it was proposed that school/care staff supplemented the introductory visit process by visiting the prospective pupil and his family at home.

Case files contained good evidence of the education and social reports and other information gathered prior to admission. Care plans, Personal Education Plans, Looked After Children documentation and the school's own review processes were evident on case files. Leaving processes were described as a celebration of a boy's time at the school with emphasis on his achievements – see comment under Achieving Economic Wellbeing. That celebration was then combined with solid work to prepare a boy for the next stage in his life.

Young people 's contact with home is actively encouraged by staff and although there is a payphone available boys spoken to said that on occasion staff allowed them to 'phone home using the school phone with the privacy that afforded. Most of the boys also had mobile phones which also enabled contact.

At the last inspection it was noted that on occasions boys were going to staff homes for meals without this necessarily having been sanctioned by parents. Since then the school has introduced a comprehensive policy document which sets out the circumstances of such invites, the absolute requirement for parental knowledge and agreement, the need for CRB clearance in respect of staff's adult family members and the need for individual risk assessments. The Head of Care maintained the view that such home visits were important in the normalisation of boarding situations but fully recognised the need for prior agreement and assessment.

## **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

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The school provides a planned programme of support for leavers with contact extending into leavers' adult lives. The school provides sufficient living space for boys in accommodation, which is being upgraded on a rolling redecoration and refurbishment programme, and which was said by boys to provide sufficient privacy.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

With the exception of one very large double bedroom, which is occupied by two of the older boys, all others sleep in single rooms most of which are themselves large and contain bed, wardrobe, table, chair/s, and in most cases, armchairs or settees. Boys spoken to said they liked their rooms and could enjoy privacy there. Replacement of old windows with double glazed units had increased warmth and cut down noise. That programme was continuing over the coming year. Redecoration and plastering was also

continuing with boys able to choose the colour scheme in their rooms within certain limits. The refurbishment programme included downstairs communal areas. Bathroom areas had been included in the refurbishment and boys spoken to said that they were satisfactory and afforded sufficient privacy.

The school has an Aftercare Committee with a former staff member acting as Aftercare Officer. Considerable attention is given to leaving processes which celebrate a young person's time at the school and their achievements. Emphasis is put on careers guidance and there is a section of the Board Room which is given over to information about further education courses, Colleges and career requirements.

School staff arrange care reviews in Years 10 and 11 which involve parents and any linked professional staff from home areas, to consider strategies to help each leaver 'deal with the realities of their particular circumstances'. The review has available to it the outcome from an assessment document adapted by the Aftercare Officer from the Looked After Children Leaving Care Assessment. The overall aim is to improve, or at least to support, a young person's transition from school to their next placement or to independent living. To that end the school has good links with local Connexions staff.

The school is proud of many its leavers and their successful further education or career achievements, such as those who are serving Police Officers, for example. Leavers are able to stay in touch with the school for as long as they wish and staff point to the number of former pupils who attend the Annual Reunion on School Sports Day.

## 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)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

1, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The school continues to be well managed and well run with an experienced, committed staff team who work to pupils' best advantage.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

#### **EVIDENCE:**

The school's Statement of Purpose is available on the school's website, and during introductory visits to the school parents are offered a copy of the school's Welcome Pack which includes extracts of the school's policies and Statement of Purpose. Available brochures also highlight the Statement of Purpose.

The inspection took place at a time when because of education authorities' inclusion policies and programmes, referred numbers of new pupils for the year 2007/2008 had dropped. As a consequence it was planned to mothball part of the teaching and residential provision. This means redundancies among both sets of staff and a process was starting in the school during the inspection week to assess future staffing needs.

Nevertheless the care team has continued to be led effectively by the Head of Care who was himself close to completing a Diploma in Social Work. Of the nine care staff, four had already completed NVQ Level 3 in Child Care with another two working towards it. There was a good spread of other qualifications among the care staff group. Together with the help of the NVQ assessor who worked with the staff group one night per week, the link with the sister Residential Special School and its NVQ Centre continued to benefit the staff group who were able to access relevant courses.

Other available training focused on supervision for staff which was currently linked to staff appraisal. The care staff shared office accommodation with the Head of Care who was able to provide ad hoc supervision to supplement planned formal supervision sessions.

Staff spoken to were confident that communication between staff, and across staff groups, was very good – a lot of work had been put into getting communication right, for example, a senior member of the care group attended education staff meetings to ensure that information was passed both ways. The Head Teacher and his senior managers met regularly and the school's performance was regularly monitored using key records. An Ofsted (2006) recommendation that the school's performance should be rigorously monitored had helped to clarify that process. The Head Teacher met the Governors at intervals to report on the school's progress.

Two Governors were met during the inspection as they carried out their half-termly visit. The Governors commended the management of the school and the good levels of collaboration between education and care staff. The Governor's reports on their visits were examined and were seen to offer comprehensive comment on the school's operation and the care of the young people.

# **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)
 2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
 3 Standard Met (No 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	3	
15	3	

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

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

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION		
Score		
3		
3		
4		
3		
3		

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

MANAGEMENT			
Standard No	Score		
1	3		
18	N/A		
19	N/A		
28	3		
29			
30	3		
31	3		
32	3		
33	3		

#### **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		The school should re-introduce the School	01/06/07
		Council as soon as is practicable.	
2		The school should ensure that all placing officers	01/05/07
		have information about the complaints procedure	
3		The school should consider whether introductory	01/06/07
		visits to potential pupils' homes and families	
		could enhance the admission process.	

# **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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