

Breckenbrough School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121765
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	380311
Inspection dates	29 February 2012–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	Marian Thomas

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	9–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicholas Evens
Headteacher	Geoff Brookes
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2009
School address	Sandhutton Thirsk YO7 4EN
Telephone number	01845 587238
Fax number	01845 587385
Email address	office@breckenbrough.org.uk

Boarding provision	Breckenbrough School Limited
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC007922
Social care inspector	Robert Curr

Age group	9–19
Inspection date(s)	29 February 2012–01 March 2012
Inspection number	380311



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Introduction

Inspection team

Marian Thomas

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 13 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 11 teachers including members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the school psychologist, governors and members of the school staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development planning, examples of pupils' work, and health and safety documentation. The inspector also took into account the views of 22 parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.

Information about the school

Breckenbrough is a small, residential special school run by the Society of Friends. It provides education for boys from more than 20 different local authorities. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs to meet their learning difficulties. All have social, emotional and behavioural needs and many are on the autistic spectrum. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. Approximately 50% are weekly boarders, with 25% boarding full time. The remaining boys attend the school in the daytime only. Year groups are small in number and pupils do not always enter the school at the start of an academic year or term. Few pupils are in the care of local authorities. Pupils under the age of 11 are educated alongside pupils in Year 7. In 2010 the school opened a provision for post-16 students.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Breckenbrough is a good school. It is not yet an outstanding school as there are still some inconsistencies, including in the quality of teaching. The complex behavioural needs of learners are skilfully met and pupils make good progress academically. An exceptionally caring ethos coupled with good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables pupils to make good gains in their personal development. Within the boarding provision all national minimum standards are met and the provision is of good quality.
- Pupils joining the school are most often working at a level lower than that expected for their age. Because their needs are effectively met, the majority of groups, including those in the sixth form, make equal progress and overall achievement is good. However, pupils in lower Key Stage 3 do not progress as well as others because tracking systems are not always used effectively to monitor their progress and inform staff of their learning needs.
- Behaviour is good and the majority of pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Pupils respond well to the consistent approach of all staff including those in the boarding provision. This results in a calm and harmonious environment throughout the school as evidenced by the continuing reduction in recorded incidents of difficult behaviour.
- Good teaching is based on accurate understanding of the curriculum and effective use of assessment information to plan lessons by the majority of teachers. However, in a small number of lessons learning does not match the needs of pupils well and progress slows, or too little time is allocated to a recap of learning and lessons end too abruptly. Teaching assistants provide skilled support in lessons.
- Leadership and management are good and continue to improve. The leadership of teaching and management of staff performance are well managed and the school is a cohesive community where all are valued. The safety of all pupils is at the heart of the school's ethos. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken.

Overall, parents are exceptionally pleased with the provision made for their children.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the achievement of pupils in lower Key Stage 3 by:
 - ensuring that tracking systems are used effectively in order to monitor pupils' progress
 - making better use of assessment information in order to plan learning for pupils.

- Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching in a small number of lessons by ensuring that:
 - activities meet the needs of all pupils
 - learning time is maximised so that planned activities are completed and the ends of lessons are used to better effect.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Inspection findings endorse the views of parents and carers that their children are making good progress. Because of the very complex nature of pupils' social, emotional and behavioural difficulties many have had troubled and disrupted educational experiences in the past including, for some, periods of hospitalisation for psychiatric conditions. As a result, the majority join the school working at levels lower than those expected for their age. Once they settle into the nurturing and supportive environment of the school, barriers to learning are reduced and the majority of groups make good progress. Whilst this represents good achievement overall, a small number of pupils in Key Stage 3 do not make as much progress as they could. This is because staff do not yet track pupils' progress sufficiently well and, as a result, do not always know how much progress each individual has made. In some lessons progress slows because the learning planned for these pupils is not based sufficiently on accurate assessment and does not match their needs sufficiently well. In most lessons pupils' learning is good and the majority respond well to their individual learning programmes. These enable them to access the well-organised and highly enriched curriculum. Pupils' literacy skills are often low on entry to the school and many, particularly those on the autistic spectrum, have difficulty writing creatively and at length. As a result of well-targeted intervention strategies and an imaginative approach, pupils are now starting to make accelerated progress in literacy. This could clearly be seen in a Key Stage 4 lesson where pupils studying Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' had collaboratively written a song which told the story of the star-crossed lovers exceptionally well. This was then performed by one talented student accompanied by his guitar. The poignant nature of the finished piece and pupils' levels of understanding of the complicated relationships depicted in the song were excellent. This was impressive, taking into account their additional learning needs, and represented accelerated progress for these pupils. Staff set

challenging learning targets for pupils throughout the school and the majority make good progress towards these.

Many pupils remain in the school until the end of Key Stage 4 or the newly formed sixth form where they are successful in completing an increasing number of qualifications and accreditations. This, combined with the high level of personal challenge within the exciting and varied curriculum, contributes to pupils' good levels of spiritual, moral and social development and their successful transfer to further education and/or the world of work.

Quality of teaching

The assessment of pupils' needs in the majority of classrooms is rigorous and informs well the planning for learning. For example, in a well prepared art lesson in which pupils, including some from the sixth form, were preparing work for their portfolios, the calm and industrious atmosphere in the classroom was clearly linked to the pupils' obvious enjoyment of the task and the strength of their relationships with staff. The wide span of ability was managed particularly effectively by the teacher, who gave continuous encouragement to each pupil on how to improve his work. As a result, all pupils made good or better progress. Reading and writing activities are well planned and much effort is made to develop pupils' communication skills at all levels. The vast majority of teachers plan lessons conscientiously and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, occasionally, planning for learning lacks consistency and, as a result, pupils finish work too quickly or a lesson overruns in time and the end is rushed. When this happens learning slows. The curriculum is well organised and personalised to meet the needs of all learners. Enrichment activities play an important role in engaging pupils, and staff, in the words of one pupil, 'work exceptionally hard to help us to follow our interests, whatever they are. For example, I want to be a pilot and have already been up in a plane with one of our teachers who is a qualified pilot.' Teaching assistants' time is planned effectively and pupils throughout the school are well supported. Staff in the boarding provision link very closely with school staff and the extended school day promotes learning well. Teaching also has a positive impact on the development of pupils' cultural awareness, for example through the myriad of visits undertaken and the celebration of festivals and events from cultures other than pupils' own. This contributes well to furthering pupils' understanding of other communities and has contributed to their good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The majority of classrooms are organised well with displays which contribute to learning. The management of pupils' exceptionally complex social, emotional and behavioural needs is excellent and, as a result, pupils show good attitudes to learning. All parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed with the inspection findings and felt teaching was good. A comment made by one sums up the views of the majority: 'This school provides my child with the best education possible. At long last he is happy to go to school.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers feel that pupils' behaviour at school is good and they are kept safe. The inspection team found the behaviour of the majority of pupils to be

impeccable, despite their high level of behavioural and emotional needs. Pupils' behaviour in the boarding provision mirrors that in the school. This is because the boarding and teaching staff work closely together and help pupils to make great strides in managing their behaviour. Pupils say behaviour is good for the majority of the time and they are well aware of what to do if they encounter difficulties with others. Their tolerant and empathetic approach helps staff to reduce interruptions to learning in the classroom. There have been few exclusions since the last inspection. Pupils care for each other and support each other well, particularly the most vulnerable. They respond well to the provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through taking part in a wide range of activities, visits, work experience and personal, social and health education they are well prepared for the next phase in their lives. Pupils say they feel safe in school. The majority are developing a good understanding of right and wrong, and the needs of others. Pupils say that instances of bullying occasionally happen but are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. For most groups of pupils attendance is improving year on year and in the vast majority of cases improves dramatically when pupils join the school. The work of the school's clinical psychologist has helped to improve the attendance and behaviour of some of the most vulnerable pupils and has resulted in some notable successes, particularly where pupils have been out of education for several years. School leaders are exceptionally aware of the scale of problems faced by many of their pupils and continue to look at innovative ways of helping them manage their behaviour and develop their future independence.

Leadership and management

The skilful leadership of the headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has moved the school forward significantly since the last inspection, for example by extending the provision to post-16, ensuring good outcomes for pupils and retaining the boarding provision's good standard. This, coupled with effective partnerships developed with outside organisations, is driving improvement further. Although systems used to track pupils' progress and set targets for learning have improved since the last inspection, senior leaders recognise further work is needed to ensure assessment is used effectively across the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and staff are clear about what is needed to raise attainment further. The school has good capacity to improve further.

Members of the governing body have good levels of skills, knowledge and understanding and are not afraid to challenge senior leaders. Through their frequent visits to school they have developed a good understanding of the day-to-day running of the school and offer a good level of support and challenge to senior leaders. Leaders, managers and the governors ensure policies and procedures for safeguarding are met and that practice is of a good standard. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and are recorded effectively. The senior leadership team and staff have ensured that the school is a highly inclusive community. Systems to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination are good and, as a result, successfully eliminate any gaps in the performance of the majority of groups of pupils. The curriculum is good and is matched well to pupils' needs. The recent focus on literacy has seen an upward trend in attainment. Enrichment activities in both the school and boarding provision have contributed extremely successfully to the school's good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders

have built highly successful partnerships with a range of organisations which benefit pupils. Links with the local community and the school's Quaker ethos help to develop pupils' understanding and respect for other communities. The school is very successful at engaging parents and carers. They are kept well informed about their children's progress and the majority are highly supportive of the work of the school.

Residential provision

The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is good. The quality of the residential provision has a positive impact on the development of pupils' social skills, self-esteem and self-confidence. The school provides an inclusive environment which celebrates the individual and provides each pupil with excellent opportunities for growth and development. Pupils say that they feel their views matter. They know their opinions are taken seriously and that their engagement has influenced key decisions in the residence. Pupils enjoy healthy lifestyles and there have been major developments in the understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. The residential support staff, supported by a range of outside health professionals, are highly committed and proactive at ensuring pupils' needs are met. They understand the importance of education. Excellent liaison exists between education and residence. Staff have a clear overview of pupils' individual educational needs and there is a seamless approach to the 24-hour integration of the residential provision and education.

The behaviour of pupils was very good throughout the inspection and they were a pleasure to spend time with. This is linked to the quality of the individual work the residential staff undertake with them and the focus on positive reinforcement of good behaviours. The school has worked hard to provide pupils with very comfortable and relaxed environments in which to live. Pupils participate in an extensive range of sports, leisure and recreational activities, and readily involve themselves in many social events. This gives pupils an awareness of the situations that affect and impact on others.

Pupils' safety is protected with robust systems of risk assessments, recruitment and health and safety procedures. There is an extensive training and development programme for staff that ensures they are kept informed of current practice and legislation. The residential staff undertake a wide range of safeguarding training but not all the senior staff that take a lead in this area have had the appropriate level of training for the role. Pupils say that their complaints and concerns are taken seriously; however, they do not have the details of the Children's Rights Director to contact if they have any concerns they want to share. There are effective monitoring systems in place to safeguard young people and these include regular visits from the governors. However, the reports of these visits do not include any examples of the contact they have had with pupils.

The recommendations from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed.

To improve further:

- ensure that all those that have a significant role within child protection receive training at the appropriate level
- ensure residential pupils are informed of their right to contact the Children’s Rights Director
- ensure that the governors report, on the residence records, their interaction with the young people.

National Minimum Standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

These are the grades for the residential provision

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	1
Quality of residential provision and care	1
Residential pupils' safety	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	2

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Breckenbrough School, Thirsk, YO7 4EN

Thank you very much for making the team feel so welcome when we inspected your school. It was lovely to meet you all. It was good to hear how much you value your school and how much you enjoy the many activities on offer to you. We want to say a particular 'thank you' to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us and shared your views so openly and honestly. We agree with those of you who told us that you think your school is good. These are just some of the things we particularly enjoyed:

- the friendly and polite welcome you give to visitors
- the way in which staff care for you and help you to make future choices
- the way in which you are all so caring and helpful towards each other and enjoy working together
- the hard work you put into learning and overcoming your problems.

We have asked your teachers to do two things to improve your school even more and we feel you can help in some areas:

- make sure that your progress in lessons is sufficiently well tracked and informs teachers' planning for your future learning
- ensure the work teachers plan for you helps all of you to learn equally well and that lesson time is used as effectively as possible.

We recognise that most of you enjoy school and feel that staff really support you. You can help them also by making sure you make the most of lesson time by finishing work completely before you rush off to break, however keen you are to get on the 'budget bikes'!

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas
Lead Inspector

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