

Breckenbrough School Limited

Breckenbrough School Ltd, Sandhutton, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, YO7 4EN

Inspection dates

19/01/2016 to 21/01/2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding **1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Residential students enjoy the boarding experience. They place great value on the sense of community it provides and like the different activities on offer. They recognise that living here helps them to develop social skills and capacity for independence. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the benefits that their children derive from residence.
- Residential students feel very safe. There is no bullying, and they have total confidence that adults within the school will deal with any concerns they may have. The school's systems to safeguard residential students are exceptionally robust. Behaviour within the residential setting is very good. Staff know the individual needs of each student very well and so can respond effectively to any signs of distress or anxiety.
- The school is highly effective in promoting the health of residential students. As well as liaising with external health professionals, the school has an in-house psychologist. This is of enormous benefit to the emotional wellbeing of residential students. Staff have developed exceptionally detailed care plans which are fully shared with residential students. Plans are clear, regularly monitored, and set realistic targets for achievement. This ensures that residential students make outstanding progress in all areas of their lives.
- Staff are experienced, receive excellent training, and are totally committed to the ethos of the school. Care staff, teachers and others work in harmony to provide a high level of support to residential students. The skill and application of staff contributes to the exceptional outcomes for residential students, particularly in respect of their social development.

- The school's quality of leadership is exceptional. Monitoring of the residential provision is extremely thorough, identifying areas of weakness and informing detailed plans for improvement. External scrutiny by the governing body is very strong, providing an additional level of quality assurance. The school meets all national minimum standards. Three points for improvement have been made.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve formal supervision of staff by providing training for supervisors and implementing a consistent recording format.
- Ensure that the administration of medication takes account of all elements of recommended best practice.
- Introduce regular, formal meetings for residential students within their boarding houses.

Information about this inspection

The school was given notice of the inspection three hours before it commenced. The inspector met with: the headteacher; head of care; residential care officers, teachers and support staff; and a number of residential students individually and in groups. Most residential students had also completed the Ofsted point-in-time survey. School policies and procedures, general records and individual case files were scrutinised. In addition, the inspector contacted two parents by telephone and had access to parental surveys. He also spent time in all parts of the residential accommodation and observed routines, including mealtimes, at various times of the day.

Inspection team

Nick Murphy

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Breckenbrough School is situated on the outskirts of Thirsk and is the only Quaker Foundation residential special school in the United Kingdom. It caters for up to 60 boys aged 9 to 19 of average and above average ability with a range of learning and behavioural difficulties, including Asperger's Syndrome and autism. There is provision for 37 residential students in the main school building and two annexes. Currently 19 students are resident. The school has a wide range of facilities, including an off-road motorbike track.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

The large majority of students greatly enjoy residential schooling, and thrive as a result of the 24-hour support and attention they receive. They relish the activities on offer, which range from exciting outdoor pursuits to simply strolling around nearby towns and cities with staff. Those who like spending time on their own, or playing with other students, are able to do so.

Care plans are detailed and have been completely revised since the last inspection. Staff have researched various models and formats and made use of best practice examples from other sources. Plans link to the objectives set out in each residential student's education, health and care plan (EHCP) drawn up by their local authority. Staff agree with each student their targets for the term, which are realistic but challenging. The school has recently developed sophisticated tools to monitor residential students' progress against their plans. This tracking of outcomes provides strong evidence of the positive impact that living here has on students. Because of the support provided within residence, they achieve educational success, become healthier, and develop better social skills and regard for others. In particular, residential students are more self-reliant and acquire abilities which will be of lasting benefit to them as they make the transition into adulthood. One student said, 'It's good here, the best thing is probably the independence side, I get a budget to buy my own food and it helps me to prepare for my future.' Even younger students are enabled to cook meals within residence with the support of staff.

Many ex-residents keep in touch with the school long after they leave, evidence of the strong and lasting bonds they forge with staff. Many describe the school as being like their extended family.

Life within the residential houses is generally orderly and relaxed. Students address staff throughout the school by their first names. Routines provide a helpful structure for students while not being overly rigid. Relationships between staff and residential students are excellent. They provide the bedrock for the highly effective management of students' behaviour. A quiet word from a member of staff is often sufficient to calm a student who is becoming anxious, distressed or angry. Residential students get on very well together and form friendships which are valuable in developing their ability to consider the needs of others.

Staff work closely with parents, many of whom choose to send their sons here after considering and rejecting other schools. Comments from parents confirm the confidence they have in the staff's ability to keep their children safe and help them to realise their potential. One said, 'I can't think of any other school that could have done a better job with my son.' Another commented, 'My child has made tremendous progress. The staff are amazingly patient, they have taught him an incredible amount of social skills, he is much more self-aware and also aware of the needs of others.'

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Staff put the ethos of the school into every aspect of their everyday practice. They listen to residential students, treat them with respect, are attentive to their needs, and have ambitious aspirations for them. They are creative in helping residential students to overcome any barriers to success, so promoting true equality of opportunity. One residential student said, 'Staff understand you, they do not judge you.' Care staff work in close partnership with teachers throughout the school day and into residential time. This provides an excellent level of consistent, skilled and caring support for residential pupils.

The residential accommodation is organised into five separate areas. This enables the needs of different age groups to be met and provides appropriate independence and privacy for older students. The premises are warm, comfortable and welcoming. Students decorate their rooms with personal items, indicating the investment they make in the residential experience.

The school is highly effective in addressing the health needs of residential students. Activities, both on and off-site, tend to be of a physical nature, enhancing the fitness of students. Since the last inspection the school has installed an all-weather games court which is tremendously popular. A residential student commented, 'The best thing is there is so much to do, the trips out are great but if you want, you can play in the grounds for hours and tire yourself out.' The school's motocross track is highly popular. The head of care is responsible for supervising these sessions which he does with exceptional skill and attention to detail. He gives the students appropriate responsibility for carrying out safety checks before they are let loose on the track. As well as being highly enjoyable, these sessions increase students' knowledge of mechanics and develop self-discipline.

The chef accommodates the individual preferences of students as far as possible, and food is plentiful and nutritionally balanced. One residential student said, 'Being here has helped me to lose weight, I eat vegetables now and never used to.' Arrangements for administering medication have been improved, although further minor refinements are needed to make them fully compliant with current guidance.

The support which the school provides for the emotional wellbeing of residential students is exceptional. The full-time, in-house psychologist is a member of the senior leadership team, and works directly with students as well as offering advice and guidance to staff. The impact of this service on the lives of students is clearly evident. One residential student said, 'The school has really helped me with my anxiety, particularly the psychologist whom I have daily sessions with. It really helps also when I am kept busy and occupied which I am here, there is always loads to do.'

Residential students feel that their voice matters, and that staff will listen to them and value what they have to say. One said, 'We are able to voice our opinions, staff take the time to listen to you, and try and find a way to implement your wishes. If something is not possible they explain why.' There is a school council but there are no formal meetings solely for residential students within their houses. Introducing these would strengthen the consultation process.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

All staff are well-versed in safeguarding policy and practice. This extends to agency staff, who receive a thorough induction and focused training before they are allowed to work with residential students. Staff are confident in challenging or reporting any unsafe or inappropriate practice by colleagues. The school's management liaises with local safeguarding agencies when required, and takes appropriate action when concerns are raised. This commitment to keeping students safe is central to daily life in the school and in residence. Staff are constantly alert to situations which might threaten a student's safety. They intervene swiftly in disagreements between students and prevent them escalating to more serious incidents. As a result, bullying is extremely rare. One residential student said, 'Bullying? No, I have never been bullied and I've never really seen it. The smaller kids wind each other up but staff make sure there is no bullying.' This contributes to the overall feeling of security which residential students have. A group of them, when asked if they felt safe, responded unanimously, '...yes, very, absolutely'.

Residential students do not go missing, but the school has clear policies to manage any incidents which might occur. The premises themselves are safe, and access to the building is strictly controlled. Arrangements for fire safety are robust and take account of the needs of individual residential students. For example, some respond to the sound of the fire alarm with anxiety or distress. In these cases, staff will take the student outside the building prior to a fire drill. They can then hear the alarm at a distance and gradually move closer to accustom themselves to it. This means that should a fire occur, the student will respond to the alarm more calmly and follow the evacuation procedure safely.

Staff draw up detailed risk assessments for each residential student. These set out any threats to their safety or those of others and strategies to manage them effectively. They are reviewed in the light of any incidents and so take account of changing circumstances. As with the care plans, the format has been devised by staff after researching a range of examples. Staff involve residential students in talking about risks and how to control them. For example, one student wanted to keep his own motorbike in school, so the headteacher sat down with him and they jointly wrote a risk assessment. This is a good example of how the school gives residential students appropriate responsibility to manage their own safety.

The school does not use sanctions in response to unwanted behaviour. Instead, it adheres to the Quaker principles of restorative justice (supporting students to make reparation to those they have wronged) and resolving conflicts through negotiation. Staff help residential students to become more aware of their behaviour and how it might impact on others. A parent said of her son, 'He has gained massively in his understanding of his behaviour and how to relate to people. He used to lash out but now

has learnt how to control himself.' The success of the staff's approach to behaviour management in everyday practice is ensured by the quality of relationships between staff and residential students. If, however, an individual's behaviour threatens the safety of other people, staff are trained in physical restraint techniques. The need to use restraint in the residential setting is extremely rare. Nevertheless, the head of care monitors and evaluates all restraints across the school. This enables him to identify any patterns and trends in relation to students and staff involved, the time of day they occur, and other factors. As a result, individual behaviour management strategies can be adjusted to make them more effective.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Outstanding

The headteacher is highly visible and accessible to all students. He will often take a student aside if they are having a difficult time to reassure and calm them. His presence, and that of the head of care and other senior staff, reinforces the values of the school. It creates an environment where all are respected and helped to give of their best. One parent summed up her view of the school's ethos, saying, 'My son still has his problems, but the school work with him tirelessly. They see the good in people rather than the bad.'

All residential staff are appropriately qualified other than one who is progressing through the course of study. They receive all the training necessary to equip them in their role. Some of this is specific to the particular remit of the school in looking after young people with autism. Recent training has been provided by a specialist, government-funded trust, making use of current research and knowledge about the condition. This ensures that staff can meet the needs of residential students more effectively.

Staff receive regular formal supervision as well as annual performance appraisal. The head of care and a team leader carry out supervision, but their styles, and the recording format they use, are different. Neither have received training in supervision, which would increase the effectiveness of this important activity.

Staff are highly experienced and there is little turnover within the group. Plans are well-advanced to reorganise the residential staffing structure. This will provide better accountability and recognise the role of staff not just as carers but as social educators. Staff have been fully consulted about the plans and are enthusiastic for the opportunity it will give to provide a better service for students in residence.

The governing body is inquisitive and proactive, taking a keen interest in the day-to-day operation of the school, including the residential provision. Half-termly visits by governors are exceptionally robust. They report on a range of indicators as well as gauging the experience of residential students by talking to them and staff at length.

Monitoring of the residential provision both by the headteacher and the head of care is extremely robust. It analyses trends and identifies weaknesses, which are then addressed by clear action plans. Planning for future development is carried out within the senior leadership team, drawing on the input of senior staff in every part of the school. In addition, the headteacher and others make use of partnerships and networks with similar providers, providing ideas for how to improve practice innovatively. For example, an occupational health service has been engaged to work with students who

have difficulties in areas such as fine motor skills. Proposals are in place to extend this to onsite provision, making it more accessible to all students. The school has commissioned the services of a highly experienced and knowledgeable individual on a consultancy basis. All these activities demonstrate the ambition of the school to discover better ways of working to enhance outcomes for students.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	121765
Social care unique reference number	SC007922
DfE registration number	815/7002

This inspection 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	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	19
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	9 to19
Headteacher	Mr Geoff Brookes
Date of previous boarding inspection	18/11/2014
Telephone number	01845 587238
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