

Brackenfield School

128 Duchy Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 2HE

Inspection dates

15–17 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The vast majority of pupils make exceptional progress in a range of subjects from their starting points.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have the opportunity to excel in a range of academic, creative and sporting activities.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. All adults and pupils have high expectations of the standard of behaviour.
- Pupils learn about the world they live in through a range of visits and visitors. These activities are planned to have maximum impact on pupils' learning.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and this helps them to plan activities that match pupils' needs.
- Teachers plan activities that engage and interest pupils so that they want to learn. Pupils say teachers make learning fun for them.
- The outdoors and indoors are used in equal measure to help pupils learn. The outdoor environment has been organised and landscaped so that it offers a stimulating and interesting place to learn.
- Children in the early years make outstanding progress.
- The progress pupils make is checked regularly and any dips in achievement are quickly addressed.
- The headteacher is passionate about everything being as good as it can be. All staff welcome and share the headteacher's positive philosophy of 'even better if', which permeates every minute of the school day.
- All staff work extremely well as a team to ensure that standards remain high and that improvement is continuous.
- The proprietors play a huge part in the daily life of the school and know their school particularly well.
- The proprietors have ensured that all the independent school standards and early years statutory requirements are met and that safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and rates of attendance are high. However, the information gathered on attendance is not readily available in a format that allows any trends to be easily identified.
- Although the management and senior leaders meet regularly, the content and decisions taken at these meetings are not rigorously recorded.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - information on pupils' attendance is readily available so that easy analysis of possible trends can be made
 - the content and decisions taken at formal management and senior leadership meetings are more rigorously recorded.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher is dynamic and passionate about school improvement. She has a positive attitude and sees any perceived weaknesses as an opportunity to get even better. Her philosophy of 'what went well' and could have been 'even better if' is used at all levels of school improvement to great effect. The school has improved in all aspects since the last inspection.
- Senior leaders are all fully involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning. They know their roles and manage teachers' performance well. Regular scrutiny of pupils' work and lessons means that areas for improvement are addressed immediately. All adults become a part of school improvement and work well together, sharing ideas to bring about excellence. Work with other local schools helps support improvements at Brackenfield.
- Pupils' progress in subjects is carefully tracked and if any pupils need extra help or support this is given immediately and the effect monitored.
- The range of subjects that pupils may take part in is extensive. Pupils are encouraged to try new activities and are given the opportunity to excel in creative, academic and physical learning. Pupils take part in team games as well as individual activities so they learn to work together as well as strive for their own personal best.
- Visits and visitors help foster pupils' fundamental British values and excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Assemblies and philosophy lessons also support this outstanding development. Trips to places of worship are planned so that different year groups visit at the same time. This generates valuable discussion about the different beliefs of people in Britain today. Visitors such as the local Member of Parliament and the local fire and police services help pupils learn about democracy and how to keep themselves safe.
- The management team and the senior leaders are aware that information on pupils' attendance demonstrates that attendance is high. However, the information is less accessible to enable the analysis of attendance of particular groups or periods of time to identify possible trends. The management team and the senior leaders meet on a weekly basis. The minutes do not give in sufficient detail, for example, who is present and any safeguarding or teaching and learning issues that are raised. This hinders leaders and managers being able to track any possible trends and evidence that issues are being resolved.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Both proprietors play an active role in school life. They use their expertise in education and finance to support the school appropriately. They know the pupils well as they either teach or spend time with pupils. They work extremely well with the headteacher and welcome the philosophy that she brings to the school. They meet on a daily basis with the headteacher and consider a range of issues as they occur, including the school's compliance with the independent school standards and early years statutory requirements. However, these informal meetings are not always documented well enough to show the challenges that are made by the proprietors.
 - The proprietors are quick to bring about improvements. For instance, the use of attendance information was already being addressed before the inspection team left the school. The proprietor regularly checks the school grounds himself to ensure they are safe for pupils. He ensures that staff are well trained and know their obligations so that pupils are safe. Appropriate checks are made on all adults in school and risk assessments completed for activities and learning areas in school so that arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers know their pupils extremely well. They plan lessons so that they interest pupils and stimulate learning and meet their academic needs.
- In key stage 2 in particular, lessons are taught by specialist teachers with a strong knowledge of and passion about their subject. This helps pupils excel.
- A very clear marking policy is used consistently by all teachers. Pupils have the opportunity to respond to the marking and fully understand how it helps them to improve their work.

- Teachers are very good at questioning pupils so that they think for themselves and are not given the answers. In an information technology lesson in key stage 2, the teacher responded with 'You tell me' and 'What does that tell you?' to help pupils to consider why they came to a particular conclusion.
- Teachers plan very carefully so that the needs of different pupils are met. In an English lesson in key stage 2, two sets of success criteria helped to challenge pupils at appropriate levels.
- Pupils' presentation of work is excellent. Teachers expect high standards at all times and good conventions at an age-appropriate level are consistently insisted on, such as correct spellings and punctuation.
- A range of approaches to help pupils learn keeps pupils interested in learning and learning independently. In a key stage 2 mathematics lesson, pupils were encouraged to find their own ways of tackling complex problems using a range of calculation methods.
- The outdoor space is used exceptionally well as a learning environment. In key stage 1, pupils learn all about fractions using equipment outdoors before moving onto more abstract concepts.
- Teachers make sure that pupils with individual needs are given the support they need, such as laptops, and consideration when marking spellings so that any barriers to learning are overcome.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident learners. The positive atmosphere means they are not worried about getting things wrong.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to discuss items that occur in the national news and things relating to school life. They have a mature attitude when discussing issues and consider the views of others very sensitively.
- Pupils confidently raise issues that concern them, such as any perceived gender bias in activities in school. The headteacher takes an active interest in their opinions and the pupils talk about how they are very happy with how any concerns are dealt with.
- Pupils of all ages play in an outside environment that has equipment including parallel bars. Adults' and pupils' excellent management of potential risks means that pupils know how to avoid risk to themselves and to others and act in a responsible manner.
- Pupils are extremely well prepared for the transition to secondary school. For instance, they are used to moving around the school for different lessons and receiving tuition from specialist teachers.
- The wealth of opportunity to excel in a range of activities, such as sport and public speaking, helps pupils confidently move to their new school.
- Pupils of all ages work well together as older pupils support younger pupils in a range of activities, such as reading.
- Pupils feel safe. They are well educated on how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Outside visitors help them to learn about 'safe strangers' and school lessons continually reinforce how to keep safe when using the internet. Pupils say they can talk to any adult if they are worried and many of them say how the headteacher will always listen to their concerns. Parents consider that their children are safe in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils in all key stages behave in an exemplary manner.
- All pupils and adults have high expectations of behaviour. Disruption in lessons is rare. Any digression from these high standards is quietly and calmly addressed.
- Pupils speak extremely positively about their school and rates of attendance are high.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- From their starting points, the majority of pupils make outstanding progress. Most pupils leave the school in Year 6 with standards in writing, reading and mathematics that are well above the national expectations for their age.
- Pupils reach high standards in writing at all key stages. They have numerous opportunities to write from a very young age and are eager to write as the lessons and activities stimulate their imagination and enthusiasm.

- Pupils have abundant opportunities to learn mathematics using equipment to explain mathematical concepts, particularly in the foundation stage and key stage 1. In key stage 2, they are given the freedom to discover which mathematical calculations will best solve given problems. These and other experiences help pupils gain a very thorough knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts which supports the exceptional progress they make.
- Although standards reached in reading are consistently above that of similar pupils nationally, progress in reading in the last school year was not as good as expected for two year groups. Detailed and regular tracking of pupils' progress using a range of strategies was put in place and this slight dip in progress was quickly remedied.
- All pupils are successful in passing entrance exams and gaining a place at the secondary school of their choosing. Over the last four years, over 45% of pupils have been successful in gaining scholarships at their chosen secondary school.
- All pupils have the opportunity to play at least two musical instruments and to sing in successful choirs. This year the junior choir won the Music for Youth award for innovation and creativity and the infant choir won Harrogate Festival Novice award.
- Pupils' sporting achievements as teams and as individuals are outstanding. Girls and boys contributed to the accolade of winning the Harrogate and District football champions 2016 and North Yorkshire U11s. Specialist teachers help develop pupils' skills and regular fixtures with other schools help develop skills further.
- Any pupil who is identified as having additional learning needs is well supported so that they are able to make progress in line with their peers. Teachers work well with other professionals to support these pupils. Extra support is tailored to individual needs including support in lessons, small group tuition or the use of specialist equipment.
- Pupils who are identified as gifted and talented in particular subjects also receive appropriate support so that they can make best personal progress.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Children enter the early years provision with attainment typical for their age. A minority of children enter with standards in managing their behaviour which are slightly below that expected for their age. Children leave this provision having made outstanding progress and with standards across all areas of learning that are typically above that expected for their age.
- The early years provision is split into different rooms so that the needs of the two-year-olds and the older children are more effectively met. Older foundation stage children have a classroom in the main school building with its own outside provision.
- Leaders and managers in the early years know the children's individual needs extremely well.
- Teachers take great care to plan so that the rich and stimulating environment and activities engage children's interests as well as help them to learn. Even the youngest two-year-olds are involved in planning their learning. They are encouraged to bring a little black bag back to school with something inside that they love to play with. Teachers then plan learning around these toys, such as counting carrots for the horse or printing with car wheels.
- The outside environment is extremely well planned so that children learn well. The youngest two-year-olds choose to take part in parachute games with the older children in the outside area.
- Children in the Reception class are extremely well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- The equipment in the room available for two-year-old children takes account of all their needs. They have appropriately sized equipment, including facilities to rest, should they wish to, as well as a wealth of other resources to stimulate learning.
- Adults are extremely skilled at making sure their interaction and questioning is tailored to meet the needs of the different aged children.
- Older children enjoy taking part in morning registration where adults ensure that every opportunity to learn is taken advantage of such as counting the children as they arrive.
- Children in the early years behave outstandingly well. As the activities engage their interests they are able to concentrate for considerable lengths of time. Expectations of behaviour are as high for these children as they are for other pupils in school. Children are gently reminded about manners and the reason behind rules.

- Parents are extremely supportive and pleased with the learning and care their children receive in the early years provision. Leaders and managers recognise the important part parents play as early years educators. They know how parents can help them get to know their child and help them learn and settle into life at Brackenfield.

School details

Unique reference number	121757
Inspection number	10008559
DfE registration number	815/6027

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent day school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Number of part time pupils	30
Proprietor	Anthony and Helen Comerford
Chair	Anthony Comerford
Headteacher	Patricia Sowa
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7455-£8025
Telephone number	01423 508558
Website	www.brackenfieldschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@brackenfieldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 November 2009

Information about this school

- Brackenfield School is an independent day school for up to 179 boys and girls between the ages of three and 11 years.
- The school would like to change their registration from three to 11 years to two to 11 years. The two-year-old provision is currently inspected under a separate early years registration. The inspector was advised by the Department for Education (DfE) to inspect the provision for two-year-olds in view of the school's request.
- The school was last inspected in 2009 when it was judged to be good. The headteacher was appointed to her post in March 2015 following the retirement of the previous headteacher.
- The management team of the school is made up of the headteacher and the two proprietors. There is a senior leadership team but no middle leaders.
- Very few pupils enter the school at times other than at the start of the school year.
- There is no pupil currently on roll who has an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs.
- The headteacher states: 'The school's aim is to inspire a lifelong love of learning and that every child should be happy and confident. We strive to make the most of his or her individual talents, and we expect every child to leave our school as independent learners with high self-esteem, ready for the next challenge.'

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out over two and a half days, with one day's notice, by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the proprietors, senior leaders and teaching staff. They also toured the building both inside and outside.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and formally when they listened to them read and spoke to them about their work and the school.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents as well as taking into account 67 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Twenty-seven staff responded to the staff questionnaire and these responses were also taken into account.
- The inspectors visited all the classrooms and observed learning in a range of subjects both inside and outside. They also studied pupils' work in all year groups in most subjects.
- The inspectors considered the behaviour of pupils during different times of the school day, and considered pupils', parents' and staff's opinions about behaviour.
- The inspectors examined school documentation including pupils' achievement information, admission and attendance registers. They also studied a range of policies including those relating to behaviour, safeguarding, welfare, health and safety and documents required as part of the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Chris Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

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