

Inspection of Breckenbrough School

Sandhutton, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 4EN

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the support and care that the school provides. They especially praise the way that pupils are treated as individuals. One parent echoed the positive views of all who completed the survey, commenting: 'There are not enough superlatives to describe the brilliance of Breckenbrough and how much of a difference the staff and the ethos of the school have made.'

Leaders go the extra mile to make sure pupils' day-to-day experiences of school are as stress-free as possible. However, their academic expectations of pupils are not always high enough. In some classes, pupils do not always have the prior knowledge they need to complete tasks. This includes comprehending what they read.

The school's extensive grounds provide peaceful spaces for pupils to reflect as well as to socialise. Pupils benefit from the time staff take to talk with them, explaining how the world works and how to manage situations that cause them anxiety. The safe and nurturing environment helps pupils to behave well. Bullying is very rare. If pupils say or do anything unkind, staff make sure that pupils understand the impact on others.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, teachers, and staff are highly focused on developing pupils' life skills and resilience. Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved some areas of the school. For example, pupils' attendance has risen. The range and number of key stage 4 qualifications that pupils take has improved. However, recent improvements to the curriculum, teaching and assessment are not bedded in. The quality of education is not strong. Governors do not place enough emphasis on the quality of the curriculum in the checks they undertake. They provide support for school leaders but have not challenged them sufficiently about the quality of education in the school.

The reading curriculum is not well developed. In primary, pupils do not gain the knowledge that they need to make sense of what they read. This includes vocabulary knowledge and knowledge about how writers make descriptions come to life. This means that some pupils struggle with the more complex texts that they read in key stage 3. In addition, leaders have not developed reading for pleasure and independent reading across the school well enough.

Senior leaders have worked with subject leaders to strengthen their skills in developing the curriculum, teaching, and assessment in the subjects they manage. Some subject leaders have become more adept in this aspect of their role. For example, the history subject leader has introduced new approaches for teaching the Russian Revolution. However, in some subjects, leaders have not developed teaching methods well. This means that pupils do not gain and remember important subject-specific knowledge.

The curriculum and teaching in the sixth form are stronger than in primary, and key stages 3 and 4. Sixth-form students benefit from the subject knowledge and scholarship that their teachers have. Teachers provide students with individual guidance and feedback. Teachers check that students can apply the concepts that they have explained to them. Students achieve highly in the subjects they study in the sixth form. This helps them to move on to their next steps.

The outreach team assist older pupils well in attending college courses. They also make sure that any work experience runs smoothly. This includes accompanying pupils to meet employers. There is a separate programme in place for older pupils. This programme focuses on knowledge and skills for independent living. Pupils find individual careers advice helpful.

Pupils receive a wide range of extra help, such as occupational therapy. Leaders with responsibility for special educational needs and/or disabilities monitor the impact of this extra help. In some subjects, the curriculum has been adapted to better meet pupils' needs, but this has not always worked well. These changes have led to curriculum content in some subjects becoming too unambitious. Whole-school approaches to support pupils who struggle with communication are not fully in place.

Pupils' behaviour has improved. The number of serious behaviour incidents has reduced. Leaders provide pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour with a raft of support to help them to do so. Staff take time to explain how pupils' behaviour affects others around them. The culture of tolerance and forgiveness helps pupils to develop positive attitudes to others. To meet pupils' individual behavioural and emotional needs, leaders have assigned a key worker and mentor to work with the pupils. Mentors and key workers also promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education.

Personal development is strong. The school provides effective individual guidance and support for pupils. This helps pupils in key stages 3 and 4 to stay on track and transition to post-16 education or training.

All pupils take part in a wide range of outdoor education activities, such as rock climbing, canoeing, and caving. Outdoor education leaders ensure that activities develop pupils' confidence, determination, and ability to work with others. The personal development curriculum enables pupils to learn about how to have healthy relationships. This includes exploring consent and sexual harassment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead has a very well-developed knowledge of the specific risks that relate to pupils in the school. He has rightly identified that most pupils are vulnerable to being groomed online. The school has sensibly invested in additional training on online safety for staff. Key workers assigned to pupils play a

crucial role in keeping pupils safe. They take time to explain to pupils about the risks they may face.

The designated safeguarding lead knows each pupil very well. Staff keep careful records when concerns are raised. Designated leaders ensure that pupils that they refer to local welfare services receive the help they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of reading in the primary phase does not enable pupils to develop their reading knowledge and skills well enough. This means that pupils struggle to read and interpret the whole literary texts that are included in the key stage 3 English curriculum. The reading curriculum in primary needs to develop so that it enables pupils to gain the knowledge they need to read texts fluently and with understanding. It should also better promote reading independently and for pleasure.
- In some subjects, teaching does not consistently enable pupils to learn the taught curriculum. Senior leaders need to make sure that subject leaders have sufficient expertise in subject-specific teaching methods and how best to implement them. Subject leaders need to work more closely with the subject teachers they manage so that they fully understand agreed approaches. They should also check that they are being implemented consistently.
- Leaders have adjusted the curriculum to support pupils' specific needs. In doing so, they have lessened their expectations of what pupils should learn and remember. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders responsible for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities should work more closely with subject leaders. Together, they should focus on adapting teaching approaches, so that they are suitable, rather than changing the content of the curriculum. They should also make sure that agreed whole-school approaches to developing communication are implemented.
- There is not sufficient educational expertise on the governing body. This means that despite the governing bodies best efforts, they have not got a deep enough understanding of the strengths and weakness in the quality of education. Governors should develop further expertise to enable them to effectively hold school leaders to account for the quality of education in the school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	121765
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10200703
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Clarke
Headteacher	Simon Bannister
Website	www.breckenbrough.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Breckenbrough is a residential special school which caters for boys with autism spectrum disorder.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below the national average.
- Pupils are admitted from any local authority in England. The majority of pupils are day boys.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans. The school is located on a large site and is a Quaker Charitable Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

- The school uses two alternative providers which are registered, York College and Darlington College. They also use Daisy Chain Educational Services for one pupil. This is an unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chair of the governing body, the special educational needs coordinator, the careers coordinator, the personal development leaders, and the leader for outreach, together with the leader for social tracking.
- Inspectors spoke with two groups of pupils and spoke informally with pupils at breaktimes.
- Meetings were held with two representatives from a local authority that works closely with the school. The inspector made a telephone call to Daisy Chain Educational Services.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, art, and history, in both the primary and secondary phases. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to the school's curriculum, along with the school's own evaluation and its development plans. Inspectors also sampled education, health and care plans for two pupils, as well as internal plans detailing to the individual support the pupils require.
- Inspectors reviewed 26 comments made by parents on free text in Ofsted Parent View, as well as 29 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and considered 40 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- The single central record was checked. An inspector also reviewed records of safeguarding concerns and referrals. A meeting was held with the head of social education, who is also the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gill Booth

Ofsted Inspector

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