

Breckenbrough School Limited

Sandhutton, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 4EN

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a non-maintained special school for boys aged from nine to 19 years. The children have a range of complex needs, including autism spectrum disorder.

There are 69 children on the school roll. 14 children have residential placements. Overall, there is capacity for 23 boarders. Children stay between one and four nights per week. Boarding accommodation is in the main school building. The school provides a range of facilities, including a motocross track, a bike maintenance garage, an all-weather sports pitch and a gym.

The headteacher and the head of social education have both been in post for a number of years.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 January 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 15 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress in all areas of their development, and their self-belief and confidence improve significantly as a result of visiting this residential provision. Children thrive in an environment where they can be themselves. One child said, 'I can be who I am here, I'm not made to try and be like other children.'

Children enjoy good relationships with staff, and staff know and understand them well. There have been some recent changes in the staff team due to illness and staff leaving. The staff work hard to cover shortages so that the children receive consistent care from people they know. Children said that they sometimes feel sad when staff leave as they see staying in residence as like 'being with a second family'.

Through the most restrictive periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, a core team of staff worked tirelessly to ensure that the school and residence remained open for those who needed them. During this time, children in residence made use of the spacious grounds. They enjoyed a range of activities, including walks, cycling and barbecues. For those who remained out of school and residence, additional support was provided virtually through telephone calls and outdoor meetings where possible. This helped children to remain in a suitable routine.

Across the school, children are supported by staff who offer a nurturing and respectful approach. When children arrive in school, it is recognised that they need time to be able to develop individualised coping strategies at their own pace. The strategies they learn help them to manage their social, emotional and sensory needs. Once they start to learn how to manage the world around them, they are able to stay in school and are open to learning. Some children who have been out of school for long periods are now back in education and learning for the first time. One parent said, 'It's the first time [name of child] has been in school for years and he actually likes it there. It's a miracle school.'

Older children transition into college placements with support from the school's social education outreach team. The outreach team remains on site to provide as much help as is needed. After children leave the school, support continues through the 'Beyond Breckenbrough' provision to make sure that they succeed in later life.

Children's emotional health significantly improves. They access well-coordinated health support on the school site. Children receive help from a range of professionals, including occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and the school's psychologist, who provides personalised sessions. This support helps children to learn their own strategies to help them to manage their thoughts, feelings, frustrations and anxieties.

There is a shared focus across school and residence around preparing children well for later life. Many children arrive isolated from their peers and with limited social

skills and independence. Children leave with confidence, knowing they have a range of skills. These include cooking, budgeting and independent travel skills. Some children learn to drive. One child said, 'This school actually made me realise I have potential.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The staff have strong relationships with the children. They know the children very well. The staff use their knowledge and their relationships with children to pick up on the signs that they may be upset. The staff identify any issues quickly and use children's own preferred ways of support to help them. As a result, there is no use of physical intervention.

Children learn about risks and staying safe. Staff support children to use this knowledge to stay safe in the community. This helps children to recognise danger and increases their independence and social confidence. Children and parents are well supported to recognise and manage other risks, such as online safety. In addition to work in school, other resources, such as an online platform, are provided to children, parents and staff to help them understand how to stay safe online.

Staff know the procedures to follow to keep children safe. They are quick to take action to prevent harm. The designated safeguarding lead works closely with other professionals, such as the local authority designated officer, to share information to protect children.

All aspects of health and safety are regularly monitored throughout the school. A fire drill has been missed and has not been conducted in line with the national minimum standards.

Safe recruitment procedures are followed to make sure that children are supported by staff who have undergone appropriate checks. The recording of the verification of references varies and does not always demonstrate the quality of the questions asked to make sure that staff have good working histories.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Some staff report a lack of leadership in the residential provision. Staff do not always feel supported by the head of social education. Some staff feel that they are treated differently, and others report a lack of direction. Some staff feel that they cannot report concerns to senior leaders, and others feel that their concerns when raised are not always acted on. The lack of support for staff affects staff morale, team functioning and staff confidence in leadership. The lack of leadership in residence does not drive forward the development of the residential provision.

Staff receive supervision. The quality of the supervision recordings varies. For example, some are very brief and lack reflection about children and staff practice.

The poor recording makes it difficult to determine how effective leaders are in supporting the staff, addressing issues and in assisting development.

A dedicated governor has good oversight of safeguarding practice across the school. The governors have general oversight of the residential provision through the head of social education attending the education committee meeting. The head teacher also presents his report at the leaders residential meeting once per term. There is no dedicated residential governor. The lack of a residential governor does not provide additional oversight of the service and the quality of the residential leadership. This is a missed opportunity to help leaders identify short falls and further develop the service.

There is a social educator lead who is designated to overseeing the tracking of children's social progress. The tracking process identifies children's strengths and helps to target where extra learning is needed. Areas for development are quickly identified and focus on making sure that children continue to make good progress.

The head of social education recognises the strengths of this provision. There is a residential plan for improvement. Within this plan, they have not identified all areas for development effectively, particularly around the leadership of the staff team.

The residential leaders and the head of social education work closely with other specialists to make sure that children have the specialist help they need. These include the school's psychologist, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and professionals from the local authority.

The head of social education and school leaders have high aspirations for children. They are strong advocates and challenge other services to make sure that children receive the support that they require. The head of social education and school leaders listen to the children and make sure that their voice is central to all their care planning decisions.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- The school ensures that fire drills are regular (at least once per term) and carried out in 'residential time'. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 7.2)
- The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and takes appropriate action where necessary. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 13.1)
- The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 13.3)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 13.4)

Recommendations

- The registered person should consider improving the quality of supervision notes. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 19.6)
- The registered person should consider more detailed recording of the verification of references. ('Keeping children safe in education', 204, page 50)
- The registered person should consider appointing a governor specific to the residential provision. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 13.1)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC007922

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Simon Bannister

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector

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