



Breckenbrough School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121765
LEA North Yorkshire
Inspection number 281093
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Kath Halifax CfBT Lead Inspector

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Sand Hutton
School category	Non-maintained special		Thirsk
Age range of pupils	9 to 17		North Yorkshire YO7 4EN
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01845 587238
Number on roll	34	Fax number	01845 587385
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Quentin Fowler
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr T Bennett

Age group 9 to 17	Inspection dates 24 May 2006 - 25 May 2006	Inspection number 281093
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Breckenbrough is an independent residential special school run by the Society of Friends (Quakers). Currently, it provides education for boys from 18 local authorities. Of the 34 on roll, 25 have Asperger's syndrome and have social, emotional and behavioural needs. All have statements of special educational need to meet their learning difficulties. All are of White British heritage, and seven are looked after by the local authority. There are three boys under the age of 11. They are educated alongside pupils in Year 7. Seven pupils attend the school only in the day time.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, which is successful in helping pupils who have failed in mainstream education make a success of their lives. The school's overall view of its effectiveness matches the inspection judgement. Achievement is good overall because of good teaching. As a result, and despite having been out of school for up to three years, pupils achieve between 6 and 11 passes in GCSE. Achievement in science is outstanding because of excellent teaching. This good and outstanding achievement is re-enforced by outstanding aspects in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) that has a strong impact on pupils' personal development. Pupils behave extremely well and derive great enjoyment from their education. As a result attendance is good. Furthermore, the good boarding provision, alongside good care and guidance, contributes significantly to pupils' confidence and maturity. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 in English and mathematics is only satisfactory because weaknesses in assessment slow down the pace of pupils' learning. The curriculum is satisfactory. While some excellent work is done in PSHCE, there is no planned programme for sex and relationships education. This affects pupils' understanding of keeping safe. Equally, though a faith school, the omission of religious education limits pupils' understanding and tolerance of some of the major world faiths. Leadership and management are, overall, satisfactory. The good leadership of the headteacher is influential in maintaining the ethos of the Society of Friends. However, evaluation of the school's performance lacks rigour and is sometimes inaccurate. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Despite staffing difficulties, pupils continue to leave with a good range of GCSE awards. Capacity to improve is satisfactory because of strengths in teaching and leadership that give pupils the skills and confidence to succeed in the world of work. Parents and carers speak very highly of the school. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The latest report by the Commission for Social Care Inspections in November 2005 shows satisfactory improvement from the previous visit. It recognises that almost all of the National Minimum Standards are met. Since the report, managers have responded well to most of the areas identified, but still need to secure written permission from the parents of pupils who smoke. The report can be found at www.csci.org.uk.

The boarding provision is managed very efficiently. Daily handover meetings ensure effective communication between the residences and school. Care is a priority, and the number of staff employed provides well for individual safety and needs. Relationships with adults are outstanding and built on mutual trust. Pupils especially appreciate the healthy, plentiful range of high quality food. Good use is made of the community to further pupils' education, for example, through evening classes at nearby colleges. Very good links are maintained with parents. Good use is made of the facilities for evening activities such as drumming, cycling and the motorcycle club. The introduction of Pupil Development Packs has ensured good care, and education staff

are working towards the same targets, resulting in very good progress in pupils' personal development. Pupils preparing for examinations take advantage of the revision club but those in other age groups report there is no set time for them to do their homework. This slows their rate of progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve systems for tracking pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 so that teachers can accurately identify gaps in learning in English and mathematics and plan to fill these.
- Implement statutory programmes for sex and relationships education and for religious education that will help all pupils to adopt safe, healthy and harmonious lifestyles and an understanding of other faiths.
- Put into place rigorous systems to measure the school's performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The overall picture at the school is of good achievement. By Year 11, pupils gain between 6 and 11 subjects in GCSE, with over one third being at grade C or above. Taking account of their standards when they enter the school, this amounts to good progress. Achievement in science is outstanding because teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and accurately record pupils' attainments and identify gaps in their learning. Good examination results have enabled the majority of pupils to go on to further education or open employment. Some have gone on to take degrees and others have forged successful careers, for example, in the police or army. Thus the school prepares its pupils well for future economic well-being. By Year 11, there is no significant difference in the achievement of any group of pupils, including those with Asperger's syndrome and those who are looked after by the local authority. Pupils who are gifted achieve highly through taking examinations early, including AS level mathematics. Talent is nurtured well enabling, for example, pupils to achieve county colours in pole-vaulting.

Progress in Years 7 to 9 is only satisfactory. Pupils are clearly making progress but gaps in learning have not been identified or improved. This is because there is little recorded evidence of progress in mathematics and English, owing to a lack of rigour in assessment procedures. Pupils have subject targets in mathematics but these are not always used. This and the lack of subject targets in English reduce the rate of progress. A state of affairs that is compounded by literacy skills not being promoted as well as they should be in other subjects in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in both age groups achieve high standards of behaviour and, though having had very negative attitudes to education previously, now have good attendance and enjoy their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They respond especially well to the ethos of the Society of Friends, showing tolerance and understanding. The attendance of all pupils improves dramatically during their time at the school and is good. As a result of the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and through their academic achievement and social successes, pupils gain a genuine belief that they are of value. Pupils are justifiably proud of their achievements. Those who have complex behaviour needs because of their conditions are helped to manage them very well, enabling them to be educated alongside their peers. From Year 7, working as part of a team prepares pupils well for their future. Pupils eat healthily and take exercise but not all are fully conversant with the dangers of inappropriate relationships. Religious education has been taken off the timetable and, as a result, many pupils are not well prepared for living in a multicultural society. Most show respect for other cultures but a few lack the understanding of the beliefs and traditions of major world faiths that would enable them to show the same degree of respect.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some outstanding teaching being observed in Years 10 and 11. It is better in this age group than in Years 7 to 9 because the challenge of working towards GCSE really fires the enthusiasm of both teachers and pupils. Furthermore, the assessment procedures required by the examination boards identify gaps in learning and provide pupils with a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Meticulous planning and detailed assessment in science enables pupils to achieve highly because teachers are clear about how to progress learning. This is not always the case in English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9, where recording and reports tend to focus on the topics covered rather than the knowledge and skills acquired. Furthermore, targets for improvement are almost all behavioural and not linked to specific subjects. In all age groups, excellent relationships between pupils and adults give pupils the confidence, as stated by one teacher, to 'strive for the sky'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, although this judgement is at odds with managers' view that the curriculum is good. It cannot be good because it does not meet all legal requirements. Religious education is not taught, neither is PSHCE provided fully. While some excellent PSHCE work is done in the residences and throughout the school day, pupils miss out on a formal programme about sex and relationships education and substance misuse, negatively affecting their awareness of keeping safe and healthy.

A suitable amount of time is allocated to most subjects but the timetabling of some lessons affects pupils' progress. This is particularly so in English and Mathematics in Years 7 to 9 where many of the lessons are in the afternoon, some starting as late as 15:05. Nevertheless, the curriculum has some good features. The range of GCSE courses stretches pupils academically. In addition, pupils are motivated because courses are matched to their interests, for example, law or photography. The focus on sport, especially outdoor and adventurous activities, contributes considerably to pupils' physical health and mental well-being. Enrichment through evening activities is good with, for example, theatre visits and a computer club contributing to pupils' progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good care and support. Child protection procedures are in place and understood by staff. Health and safety procedures are robust. Where appropriate, assessments of the risks presented by individual pupils are undertaken. Similarly, the assessment of potential risks on visits out of school and in lessons is noted carefully. Pupils report they feel safe. For example, one commented, 'The school is like my family - in fact it is my family'. Good links are maintained with other professionals in the pupils' home area and very good work by the aftercare officer helps pupils make the transition to life after Breckenbrough successfully. Suitable links have been formed with the Connexions officer, but the lack of a formal careers education programme reduces pupils' understanding of the world of work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The judgement of satisfactory for leadership and management differs from that of good by the school. The headteacher is effective in leading the staff to break down barriers that in previous schools have negatively affected pupils' progress. The school has a good academic track record and is promoting personal development and well-being very successfully. As a result, pupils make astounding improvement in their attitude and behaviour, and are enabled to succeed in the wider world. However, there are no systems to track the achievement and progress of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and this restricts progress. Managers have not considered the impact of taking religious education and programmes about sex and relationships education and substance misuse off the curriculum and how this is affecting pupils' awareness of how to keep healthy and safe.

Governance is inadequate. Governors keep in close contact and visit the school regularly, and their monitoring of finances, health and safety, and the careers of pupils who have left is good. However, they are not monitoring adequately what is happening in school. Governors are not fully involved in self-evaluation and, while the views of pupils and parents are sought informally, there is no school council and no questionnaires to parents. Some curriculum requirements are not met. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory in relation to standards attained but key issues

to formally monitor and evaluate the school's performance have not been fully addressed. Because of the impact of the school's ethos on pupils' personal development and due to skilled teaching, the school has the capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	No
Learners are educated about sexual health	No
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	No
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	No
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we met a number of you during the recent inspection of your school. We especially enjoyed eating lunch with you, and talking to you - even about motorbikes! Thank you for being so polite and friendly, and helping us in our work. We would also like to thank you for letting us use the Board Room as our base, even though this meant you could not use the keyboards during your free time.

What we liked most about your school

- You make dramatic improvement in your attitude and behaviour during your time at Breckenbrough, and try extremely hard, even when things are difficult.
- Your success in GCSE exams is good overall and impressive in science.
- The sport programme, activities in the residences and nutritious food contribute significantly to your health and well-being.

What we have asked your teachers and governors to do now

- Improve systems for tracking your progress in Key Stage 3 so that teachers can identify accurately gaps in your learning in English and mathematics.
- Provide programmes for sex and relationships education and for religious education that help you all to adopt safe, healthy life styles and an understanding of other faiths.
- Improve the way managers keep a check on how well the school is doing.

We enjoyed our short time with you and wish you well for the future.