



# The Brakenhale School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110047  
**LEA** Bracknell Forest LEA  
**Inspection number** 283122  
**Inspection dates** 9 November 2005 to 10 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Wioleta Hala HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Rectory Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Bracknell
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		RG12 7BA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01344423041
<b>Number on roll</b>	566	<b>Fax number</b>	01344300397
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr A Young
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23 November 2004	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Salter

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	9 November 2005 - 10 November 2005	283122

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The Brakenhale School is a smaller than average mixed community secondary school with 519 students aged 11 to 16 plus a small sixth form with 47 students. The proportion of students claiming free school meals is broadly average although the school believes that more are eligible to claim. Roughly 90% of students come from British white backgrounds; others are from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students that speak English as an additional language is a little higher than in most schools. There are a few looked after children. The proportion of students with special educational needs (SEN) is well above average and the proportion with statements of SEN is above average. Of the students taking GCSE examinations in 2005, 20% did not start the school in Year 7; this is high. In other years, the figure is average. The need for special measures was removed a year ago in November 2004. A new headteacher joined the school in September 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The school sees itself as a satisfactory school and inspectors agree. It provides satisfactory value for money overall but not in the sixth form. The school has overcome many of the problems it faced in recent years and is now ready to move into its next phase of development. Parents recognise the improvements made and most are supportive. Educational provision in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. Students' achievement is satisfactory but standards are still below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but too varied, including examples of both excellent and unsatisfactory work. Students' personal development and well-being are good. The school has worked effectively to improve students' attitudes so that they are happy to attend, cooperate well and want to work hard. Staff and students show a real determination to make the school better. The school has sufficient capacity to improve with strengths in the senior team and some subject areas. Some staff, however, are not yet sufficiently analytical or self-critical in relation to their efforts to maximise students' achievements. Improvement since the last inspection has been reasonable overall but not enough has been done to improve work in history and the sixth form. The sixth form is inadequate.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 4**

The school was too generous in judging the sixth form as satisfactory; inspectors find it to be inadequate because students do not achieve as well as they should overall. This is because of shortcomings in teaching, in the support and guidance provided for students and in leadership and management. Numbers in the sixth form are very low and, in some subjects, there is only one student. This is not cost effective, neither does it provide opportunities for the type of discussion and group activity that extend students' learning. However, inspectors agree with the school that sixth form students' personal development and well being are satisfactory.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

\* Increase the rate of students' progress by improved use of data about attainment; set high expectations and check regularly to see that these are being met\* Improve the overall quality of teaching so that more of it is of the high quality that already exists in places\* Ensure that processes for quality assurance and self-review are strong at all management levels and areas so that staff are fully aware of how they can contribute to raising standards and do so. The school requires significant improvement in relation to its very small sixth form. It should:\* Improve the quality of educational provision in the sixth form and the leadership and management of it so that all students reach the educational outcomes of which they are capable.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

Standards are below average but this represents satisfactory achievement overall based on students' lower than average starting points. Nevertheless, standards could be better in all stages and particularly for students aged 14 to 18. The school has set itself suitably challenging targets. In Years 7 to 9, standards are rising faster than nationally but have not yet matched the average. Test results in 2005 improved clearly from 2004. Standards have risen because of the positive effects of well applied strategies, both national and school based, that have enhanced the quality of teaching and learning. GCSE examination results showed a modest improvement from 2004 to 2005 although the percentage of students achieving the higher GCSE grades has not gone up in the last two years. The 2005 targets were not met. The school does, however, have some good strategies to boost results and these have already been successful in mathematics. The best results in the 2005 GCSE examinations were in design technology, science (double award), mathematics, child development, physical education and art. The weakest were in science (single and applied courses) and history. Achievement in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Very few students attain the higher grades in A-level even though they may be expected to, considering their GCSE grades. Some students do well on vocational courses.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students enjoy their education and most attend school regularly. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is broadly average. Punctuality to lessons is good in Years 7 to 11 but less so in the sixth form. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and best in relation to moral and social development. The school has adopted a commercial scheme designed to help students achieve success, self-discipline, and develop responsibility. The impact of this scheme, extremely well managed by the school to achieve consistency of practice, is clearly visible in the calm, business-like atmosphere of most lessons and students' good behaviour. Students show consideration for each other, welcome visitors and have good attitudes to their work. Students feel safe and secure. They have confidence that they can get adequate support if troubled by bullying or discrimination which occur rarely in the school. Students understand when they might be in potentially dangerous situations and how to respond. They speak positively of the ways in which they are involved in school activities, through the School Council/Cadre, for example. The school promotes student's healthy lifestyles; it is currently working towards a Silver Healthy School Award, having already gained the Bronze Award.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

Inspectors agree with the school that teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 but, in the sixth form, inspectors judge them to be unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 11, teaching is sufficiently well planned so that students build on their previous learning. Most lessons seen were satisfactory, some were good and some outstanding. A few inadequate lessons were seen in which teachers' expectations of what students might achieve were too low. In the best lessons, teaching was lively and purposeful, with stimulating resources and challenging questioning that took students forward speedily. As a result, students produced work of a very high quality such as in a Year 10 class, where they quickly created interesting multi-media presentations using computers. Classroom management is very good in most lessons and designated students take on specific tasks to assist teachers in achieving this. In the sixth form, teachers' expectations are too low. Students are often not aware of the skills needed to raise their standards and teachers place insufficient emphasis upon striving for higher level achievement. Some good teaching was seen but the generally very low numbers limit the range of learning styles that can be adopted. In addition, teachers are not sufficiently well supported by management to have access to good data about students' potential academic performance and advice on how best to achieve it. The school intends to build on existing good assessment practice in a small number of subjects, in mathematics for example, to set up whole-school systems to track and promote students' progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

The curriculum meets adequately students' needs in all years. In Years 10 to 13, collaboration with local schools and the further education college has broadened the range of courses offered to students. In September 2005, the school responded to concerns about students' attainment on entry by introducing into Year 7 lessons on study skills for all and additional literacy lessons for some; this innovation has yet to be evaluated. The learning support unit provides satisfactory support for students with specific needs. The school provides a satisfactory range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities including sport, drama, music and visits. Actors and artists in residence also enhance the curriculum and enrich learning. Students are encouraged within lessons to take responsibility for specific tasks, including greeting visitors to the classroom. These activities all have a positive effect on students' personal development as well as their progress.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

Inspectors confirm the school's view that systems for monitoring and promoting student's attendance, punctuality, their behaviour and their personal development are generally satisfactory. Systems for ensuring that students make the best possible academic progress are not yet fully developed although some good practice exists in places. Careers education is adequate. In the sixth form, not enough is being done to keep a close check on students' progress. These students are not provided with adequate guidance about their personal development in the form of some well-planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Child protection procedures are in place; staff are very well trained and alert to any signs of distress. Form tutors generally play an effective role in caring for and guiding students but some tutor time is not used well, particularly in the sixth form. The school encourages students to develop responsible attitudes to their work, their future and to the community. It is committed to treating and caring for every student as an individual. Arrangements to support looked after children are good.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory overall with some strengths; in the sixth form they are unsatisfactory. One strength is in the vision of senior staff and some others for the further development of the school. Determined efforts have already had a clear impact on raising standards in Years 7 to 9. The senior staff have a firm grasp of the existing quality of teaching through an established programme of lesson visits. Another strength is in the way the school has embraced a programme of work designed to raise the overall quality of teaching and learning. Most staff have applied the programme's strategies consistently. Students speak positively about a climate for learning that recognises effort and achievement, does not tolerate disruption and encourages everyone to contribute. The school has still not, however, eliminated unsatisfactory teaching in some areas. Senior staff make sound use of the principles and practice of self-review and improvement and their evaluations are generally accurate. At other management levels, however, systems for checking on and improving performance are not yet sufficiently well established throughout the school. The school does not currently involve parents or stakeholders, other than the local authority, to any great extent in reviewing its work. Some staff make good use of assessment information to drive up standards but others lack skill or confidence. Not enough is being done to analyse the performance of specific sub-groups of students. In the sixth form, the temporary arrangements for leadership and management are not adequate given the post-holder's other responsibilities. Not enough is being done to raise standards and many sixth form students are making

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slow progress. Teachers are not being supported in the provision of well compiled information about attainment or targets for improvement.



## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	4
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	4

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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	Yes
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 visited the school recently. Thank you for the welcome and courtesy you showed us. We appreciate the help many of you gave us by talking about your work and sharing your views about the school. We are pleased that you enjoy being at the school. We found that most of you are making satisfactory progress in your studies. However, progress in the sixth form is not good enough for all students.

What we think your school does well: \* the school supports you very well in your personal development; you have good attitudes, show consideration for each other, are polite and want to work hard \* the teachers ensure that most lessons are well managed and students assist them to achieve this in many ways \* the headteacher and his senior team have a clear vision for the future development of the school and they have the ability to make further improvements \* standards have risen well in Years 7 to 9 in recent years; standards in Years 10 and 11 have gone up but only slightly; standards are generally still not high enough \* staff take good care of you; they enable you to grow in your understanding of how to stay safe, live healthy lifestyles and contribute to the community, although more could be done for sixth form students in these respects \* the school council works well and gives you a chance to have your say about what can be improved.

We have asked the school to do the following things: \* enable you to make faster progress by keeping a closer check on what you have already learned and setting high expectations of what you will learn next \* improve the sixth form, the teaching in it and the leadership and management of it, so that all students achieve their best \* we saw some good and excellent teaching in your school and ask the staff to ensure that there is more of it \* improve the ways all members of the school judge the quality of their work and what needs to be improved; check that everyone knows what part they have to play in making the school even better; make sure that they all play it so that standards go up. Many of you told us that you feel the school has improved a lot in the last few years and we know that you want to carry on improving it. We wish you all the very best for your own futures and for the future of the school.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Wiola Hola, Her Majesty's Inspector