



# Brackenfield Special School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 113031  
**Local Authority** DERBYSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 289488  
**Inspection dates** 6–7 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Patricia Potheary

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Bracken Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Long Eaton, Long Eaton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16		Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG10 4DA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0115 9733710
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	64	<b>Fax number</b>	0115 9721272
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs M Wright
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr P Ormerod
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 December 2002		

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<b>Age group</b> 5–16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 6–7 December 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 289488
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

## **Description of the school**

Brackenfield is a small special school for pupils with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties, and a minority have severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders or behavioural and emotional difficulties. A small number of pupils have physical or visual impairment. The head teacher has been in post for just over a year. The majority of pupils enter the school at Key Stages 3 and 4.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Brackenfield is a good school that provides good value for money. It offers a well-rounded education for pupils and prepares them well for the future. Pupils in all age groups enjoy school, make good progress and achieve well. This is because the quality of teaching is consistently good and leadership and management work effectively to help pupils do their best, partly by setting appropriate and challenging annual targets for each of them. Because all pupils' have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards are below those found nationally. Pupils' personal development and well-being is excellent and is a key factor in the good progress that they make. Parents are very positive about the improved confidence, independence and behaviour of their children. For example, one wrote: 'Brackenfield School has transformed my child's life.' Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community, especially in caring for the environment. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and be safe as a result of carefully thought-through programmes of study. The care, guidance and support received by pupils is also good, especially in the highly effective way their personal skills are developed. This has led to outstanding progress being made by the most vulnerable pupils, who come from very difficult circumstances. The curriculum is good with many high quality activities to enliven and enrich learning, especially from visits, sports and creative opportunities. The one weakness in the curricular provision is that the range of qualifications available is too narrow, especially for those who could excel in vocational subjects. The school has some very good links with other organisations. These enhance the provision for pupils in a host of ways, including some very good opportunities for pupils to socialise and learn alongside their mainstream peers. Good leadership and management have overseen several improvements to the school, particularly in the progress made by those with moderate learning difficulties. Systems for monitoring how well pupils do and accurate self-assessment by the school has enabled improvements to be well directed. The information gathered is substantial but is only used by management to monitor pupils' progress at the end of each school year. This prevents timely identification of pupils who might need extra support or more challenging work, to help them progress more quickly during the year.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the range of qualifications available in Years 10 and 11 is broad enough to enable all pupils to follow their interests and aptitudes, especially on vocational courses.
- Monitor individual pupils' progress more frequently so that those falling behind or needing more challenge can be identified and supported more quickly.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' progress and achievement in English, mathematics and science are better than average when compared with other similar schools nationally. This is an improvement since 2005, when pupils made broadly average progress, and is due to the focused approach to leadership, management and teaching. It is also due to staff setting appropriately challenging targets for pupils in their individual education plans. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are generally good, with several pupils reaching average standards for their age group despite their learning difficulties. Pupils who experience the most difficult personal circumstances make the most progress, which is often outstanding. There is little overall difference between the progress of pupils in different age groups, for different subjects or for those with different learning difficulties. This reflects the very individual approach taken to teaching pupils and a broad consistency in the quality of teaching. Pupils make very good progress in their reading skills. In contrast, progress in written work is satisfactory rather than good for pupils aged 11 to 14 because too few opportunities are provided for them to write freely. This has been identified by the school and is being addressed. By the time they leave the school pupils achieve a range of qualifications, which demonstrate their increasing skills and knowledge. This includes the majority who achieve good entry-level qualifications, several who achieve GCSEs and many who gain an award in personal development. No pupil gains vocational qualifications, but several pupils receive a certificate from the local college showing how well they have done in subjects such as horticulture and brickwork. Standards remain well below national averages overall because all of the pupils have learning difficulties.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well being has improved significantly since the last inspection. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of pupils is outstanding. There are numerous examples of just how well pupils improve their social skills, attitudes to learning and each other. For example, older pupils help younger classes and serve as very good role models. Their good behaviour and very strong appreciation of the beliefs and values of others is clearly evident. Many parents reported how their children have developed remarkably well, and several pupils recognise that they have 'completely turned around' their behaviour. This is partly as a result of extremely good management of behaviour, which gives pupils more responsibility and a greater say in how the school is run. Pupils respond very enthusiastically to ideas about healthy eating and many report they are eating more fruit and vegetables and taking more exercise as a result. They are especially aware of how to keep safe in lessons and elsewhere and are keen to look out for each other. Pupils report enjoying school because of the way the teachers help them so much with literacy and their learning. This, they say, has given them 'lots more confidence', or, 'I know I can do it now'. As a result, they attend regularly and arrive punctually. The outstanding sense of responsibility shown by pupils is demonstrated through their 'eco' committee, where even light switches in

staff-only areas have pupils' friendly reminders to 'switch off'. This contributes well to the many skills they develop in preparing for the world of work and college ahead of them.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching throughout the school is strong and leads to good learning overall. Work is usually adapted well to meet the needs of different pupils, although this is not consistent in the secondary department. Nevertheless, planning and assessment are usually thorough and build well on what pupils have learned before. Management of those with behavioural difficulties is effective: supportive relationships encourage some very good attitudes to learning. Teaching assistants are skilled, teach to a high standard, and make a significant contribution to the good learning taking place. Although most lessons build learning well, in some lessons the teaching strategies used for pupils aged 11 to 16, rely heavily on worksheets. This means that these lessons lack the variety of approaches which would bring them alive for more pupils and further increase their enjoyment of learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Curricular provision is mixed but contains some outstanding elements, particularly in the way pupils' social and emotional skills are developed through programmes such as the 'social use of language programme' and courses that teach about safety. Through excellent links with other providers, the curriculum also provides an outstanding array of activities and projects to suit the interests of different pupils and bring learning alive. These include golf, cycling proficiency, first aid, and residential trips abroad. The curriculum is planned so that pupils progress systematically, but there is no planning to support the key skills in all subjects by, for example, increasing pupils' opportunities for writing. This is recognised and being acted upon by the school. There are also too few opportunities for pupils to take a wider range of qualifications, especially in vocational courses, despite the good work being done to develop vocational options. Significant strengths in preparing pupils well for the next stage of their education, for their future work and for becoming good citizens ensure that the curriculum is good overall.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are kept safe through rigorous checks and robust child protection procedures. They are supported very closely in their personal development ensuring that they focus well on their work. Support for personal development underpins the whole ethos of the school and is present in all lessons. Programmes to provide this support are

extensive, highly effective and appreciated by parents and pupils alike. The guidance to support pupils in reaching challenging targets has improved. It is good and has led to good progress overall in 2006. This includes close attention being paid to working with pupils' on their individual education plans, especially in setting and reviewing targets. The way these are used in the different subjects however is not yet consistent for pupils aged 11 to 16 years, preventing progress for some being even better. Pupils say they benefit particularly from good information, work experience and college links, which help them to think clearly about the next stage and their futures.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good because new initiatives have led to some significant improvements. Careful monitoring of how well pupils are doing compared with those in similar schools has resulted in much better target setting and clearer information for teachers to use. Managers, well supported by governors, are able to identify which groups of pupils need additional help to reach these targets. This has resulted in improved teaching, leading, for example, to the majority, who have moderate learning difficulties, making good progress for the first time in 2006. Spelling for pupils aged 11 to 16 has also improved. Based on this, and other strong self-evaluation, the priorities set by the school are the right ones in terms of taking the school forward. Because the system is so new, the monitoring of how well pupils are doing only takes place at the end of the school year. This means that pupils who need extra support or challenge cannot be identified or helped sooner. This then slows the rate at which the school can raise standards further over time. The school recognises this as the next most important step for further improvement and, based upon their successes so far, the capacity to improve is good.

The school has strong staffing which includes several highly skilled teaching assistants and the employment of subject specialists. A great deal of professional development is taking place to further enhance staff skills and teaching is clearly improved.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 December 2006

Dear Pupils,

Brackenfield School, Bracken Road, Long Eaton, Nottinghamshire, NG10 4DA

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and joining you for some of your lessons very much.

We found your school to be successful, well run and caring. It is a good school, just like many of you and your parents told us it was. It helps you to make good progress. You make exceptional progress in your personal skills, behaving well and being very responsible in working for others and the environment. Your teachers and teaching assistants are very skilled at helping you to do your best and they teach you well. The way you become more mature and learn how to do things on your own is also very good and you clearly enjoy school.

We were pleased to see the large amount of sport that you play and the fruit and vegetables that you eat to try and keep healthy. You work and socialise very well together and we think that this, alongside your good skills in literacy, numeracy and teamwork, will stand you in good stead for the future. Your teachers see to it that you have an excellent range of activities and links with other schools to help you improve many of your skills and make your work interesting. The school is very successful in keeping you safe and looking after you. You told us that you need more opportunities to take vocational and other qualifications and we think you are right. Senior staff lead the school well but we have suggested that they look more often at how well you are doing so that you can receive support to reach your targets as soon as you need it. You clearly play a good part in the success of the school.

We wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Lead Inspector