

Breckenbrough School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121765
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	327560
Inspection date	1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Henry Moreton

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Simon Morley

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	9–17
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nicholas Evens
Headteacher	Mr Geoff Brookes
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2006
School address	Sand Hutton Thirsk North Yorkshire YO7 4EN
Telephone number	01845 587238
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Introduction

An additional inspector and one Social Care Inspector carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

Breckenbrough is an independent residential special school run by the Society of Friends. It provides education for boys from more than 20 local authorities. All boys have a statement of special educational needs to meet their learning difficulties. All have social, emotional and behavioural needs. Virtually all boys are of White British heritage. Approximately 50% are weekly boarders, with 25% boarding full time. The remaining boys attend the school in the daytime only. Cohorts are small in number and boys do not always enter the school at the start of an academic year or term. The local authority looks after very few boys. Boys under the age of 11 are educated alongside pupils in Year 7. A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection, joining the school in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Breckenbrough is a satisfactory school. It provides satisfactory value for money. Good features are boys' personal development and well-being, how they respond to the care, guidance and support provided to them, and the school's curriculum. Typical comments from parents are that: 'our son is thoroughly enjoying going to school, which is a first', and 'in the short time at the school we are seeing positive changes in our son'. These mirror boys' views and inspection findings.

Boys take time to settle. This is because of the complexity of their needs, their negative experiences of education before arriving at Breckenbrough and because they often join the school after the start of the school year. By the time they reach Years 10 and 11, most boys respond positively to the school's good strategies to support their emotional well-being and promote their care. As a result, most boys develop their self-esteem and the majority achieve the academic standards of which they are capable. Standards are average. This represents satisfactory progress from their starting points which are close to the national average. A minority of boys do better and reach standards in public examinations that exceed their targets.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory because teachers and staff establish good relationships with boys, ensuring clear expectations of behaviour. Learning is effective, for example, when teachers plan lessons with clear objectives that meet boys' individual needs, although on occasions, this does not happen. Where boys are interested and motivated, they respond well. This is particularly the case in art, design technology and physical education where they express their creativity or expend their energy. The school challenges the more able boys to achieve well, especially in mathematics, where learning is accelerated. It does not tailor the curriculum as well for boys who are alienated by writing and reading, although staff are working well to improve this. The school does not provide enough vocational qualifications and experiences.

Boys' personal development is good. The large majority of boys show good awareness of others as shown by the quality of discussions in lessons. Behaviour in class and around the school is satisfactory. For the older boys it is often good because the school develops well their sense of community and loyalty. Mealtimes are civilized occasions where boys and staff come together to enjoy wholesome and plentiful food. Outdoor and adventurous activities are well supported. Boys are taxed to school and this supports good attendance.

Good care, guidance and support ensure that boys are safe and secure in the school. Because of good academic guidance the more able boys enjoy good levels of academic success in public examinations. Boys' confidence improves because of the many opportunities for them to take part in a wide range of sporting and outdoor activities. Most boys respond positively, enjoying the 'options' on Wednesday afternoons that enable them to pursue individual interests such as photography and swimming. During these activities they develop a good sense of living and working together, but opportunities are not taken in the different subjects to develop an awareness of the wider community.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and governors have critically examined all aspects of the school's work, and no stone has been left unturned. Inspection evidence supports their evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The absence of fully clear lines of responsibility and accountability at all levels of management means that senior managers are overstretched at times. Governorship is improved since the last inspection

and is no longer inadequate. Most areas for improvement identified at the last school inspection are implemented fully and plans are well under way to complete the rest. All statutory requirements are now met. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 3

Overall, the quality of the boarding provision is judged to be satisfactory. All the national minimum standards are met so no recommendations are made to improve the quality of boarding. Although there are a number of good and outstanding elements in the boarding provision, the management arrangements are satisfactory which limits the overall judgements to satisfactory.

Boys' admissions to the school are organised and sensitive to boys' needs. There are good opportunities for boys and their families to visit, and for boys to stay overnight and try the school out before starting there. Information obtained about boys' care needs and care planning arrangements that details the care, support, and monitoring boarders will require are satisfactory. Boarders are happy with the support they receive from staff and staff appear knowledgeable about boarders' needs, and how to support them. Of the parents who commented, there were strong views that boarders are safe, well cared for and make good progress.

Good individual support and health care for boarders are enhanced by the important work of the school counsellor. Supporting boarders with their emotional and mental health needs is seen as a crucial part of their development, and in helping them manage their own behaviour. The integration of the school counsellor's work with the child-centred, non-confrontational approach of the school provides an effective nurturing environment for pupils to develop, mature and thrive. There is good practice in extending this support to home visits and working with parents as well, to further help boys with their emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted. There is an excellent range of activities that help to keep boarders fit and active. Meals provide a wide range of choice with healthy options and there is good discreet monitoring of boarder's diets. The management of medication has improved since the last inspection; policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated making the arrangements for boarders to have their medication much safer. Boarders feel cared for and are happy with the arrangements for when they are feeling unwell. Health plans identifying boys' health needs are satisfactory and staff will liaise with parents about supporting boys with medical appointments.

There are effective health and safety procedures to help keep boys safe in the school. Child protection, privacy, behaviour management, anti-bullying, and health and safety are well defined in policies and procedures. The practice of staff is good, accountable and safe. As one parent put it, 'our son needs to feel safe and be able to trust the adults at the school, this is a huge challenge for the school, and our son scores them nine out of ten which shows that they have achieved this'.

All staff have been trained in child protection and they know who to report concerns to about boys' welfare. Child protection issues are taken very seriously and there are good robust arrangements to ensure the safety of boys. Recruitment processes have improved since the last inspection and now meet the requirements of the relevant national minimum standards, which helps protect the safety of all boys at the school.

Pupil's behaviour is generally good in the boarding setting and there are clear expectations about this. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils founded in a sensitive

approach to behaviour management. This gives boys time and space to talk through conflict, and to develop effective strategies to manage, and to be responsible for their own behaviour. This is rated highly by boarders who appreciate having opportunities for time out and not being put under pressure that they find hard to cope with. There is some use of sanctions or 'consequences' for poor behaviour. Typically, this could be the loss of an activity or trip out from school. The effectiveness of these is now better monitored in terms of how well they influence boys' behaviour. There is good practice with regard to physical intervention by staff as a response to challenging behaviour. This is used as little as possible and as a last resort, to protect the safety of boys and staff.

Boys and their parents know how to complain and feel the school is good at listening to their concerns. Boarders are happy with the way staff listen to them and like the school council that meets regularly with the headteacher. Boys on the council are empowered to raise issues about the running of the school and are involved in decision making about what action to take. This gives boys a good say in what happens in their school and also helps develop their skills.

Boarders have opportunities to make a positive contribution to their lives and how the school is run through daily interaction, annual reviews and the school council. There are private telephones for boarders to keep in touch with family and friends. Parents are welcome to visit, are kept well informed about their boys' progress and get good support from the school to have an effective role in their boys' learning and development.

Staff effectively help boarders to increase their self-esteem, confidence and respect for others. Boys receive excellent all-round support to help them enjoy their time at school and make sound progress academically. As well as the boys, parents, governors and staff also have very positive views of the school. This is reflected in typical comments such as, 'the school has flexibility to meet our sons needs in a creative way, restoring the essential foundations of health, safety and enjoyment, they have shown exceptional commitment and expertise', and 'our son makes exceptional progress with social skills, behaviour and education'. This is helped by the integration of boarding and teaching staff and strong commitment to the school's values and approach to care. Staff are caring and sensitive, and support boys well with a range of individual, emotional and behavioural needs. Boys enjoy and benefit from an exceptional range of various activities and outdoor pursuits from motor cross to fantasy war games.

The school brochure clearly defines its aims, objectives, expectations and provision, which is fulfilled in practice. Good staffing levels and low staff turnover help to give boys continuity of care from people who know them well. Staff are supported and adequately supervised to help assist in the meeting of boys' needs. Staff have a wide range of experience and are encouraged to achieve the desired qualification in caring for boys and young people. The quality of internal monitoring is satisfactory as are the arrangements for developing staff and the delegation of tasks and responsibilities to ensure a competent staff team.

Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Boarders benefit from good individual care that has an inclusive approach, but care planning does not identify boarder's diverse needs, and demonstrate how these are being met.

The headteacher and governors are committed to continuous improvement and bringing best practice into the school. The recommendations for the last inspection have been acted on and there are further developments planned. Overall, the management of the school avoids institutional practice and upholds the school's values. This helps ensure a strong child-centred approach, so that boys at the school are able to succeed and develop their potential.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure clear lines of responsibility and accountability at all levels of management so that senior leaders have time to develop the school strategically.
- Provide more work related experiences and qualifications.
- Ensure boys have better awareness of the wider community.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

All the outcomes for boys and young people are met. There are no recommendations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of boys is satisfactory. They make satisfactory progress. A minority of older boys achieve well because of a good curriculum in mathematics, science, art and design technology. Their progress in English is satisfactory, where there is a legacy of antipathy to writing and reading. Teachers are working hard and successfully at tackling this by providing a more effective curriculum and teaching for the younger boys. The more able boys make good progress in mathematics and achieve well. Most boys gain GCSE passes in a range of subjects, with a minority gaining pass grades in mathematics, English and science. The more able boys attain higher grades in mathematics. There are too few opportunities to gain other types of accreditation, including vocational qualifications, and work related experiences.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development makes a good contribution to learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Boys show sound awareness of the diversities within society but there are too few opportunities to explore other cultures and their role in the wider community. Most boys respond positively to the school's planned opportunities to reflect on their attitude and behaviour. Most boys enjoy coming to Breckenbrough, as reflected by their attendance. Over time, boys develop confidence and self-esteem well. This means that by the time they leave most are independent and go on to further training or study. The more able boys have high aspirations, something they did not have previously. A typical parental comment is that: 'I now feel he has a future'. This echoes the boys' views. They show pride in the school and an appreciation of the difference it makes to their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is a strong emphasis on teaching basic skills. This is most successful in mathematics, speaking, listening and computing, and less so in writing and reading, although teachers are improving provision for these. Where teachers plan lessons to meet individual needs, most boys respond well. Where they do not, the pace of learning slows. Routines to address poor behaviour when it does occur are robust but learning is still disrupted. Arrangements for assessing the

progress of boys over time are satisfactory. Because teachers know boys well they challenge them in areas where they might succeed. This is evidenced in mathematics where the more able boys take the GCSE examination early. The expertise of teachers is well used to motivate boys, as in art and outdoor and adventurous activities, but the well-qualified and skilled teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively to use their full potential.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well balanced. The large majority of boys enjoy the wide range of learning activities, both in school and off site. Following the daily assembly, mornings are usually given over to lessons in English and mathematics reflecting the high profile these subjects have. Boys are mostly taught in ability groups so that teachers are usually able to plan well for their individual learning needs. The gaps in provision in religious education and personal, social and health education that were identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Work is ongoing to change the way literacy is taught so that boys are more motivated, with a greater focus on learning the language aspects of English. While there is satisfactory provision for careers education and guidance, and some developing links with local further education colleges, there are not enough opportunities for boys to develop their work related and enterprise skills, or to follow vocational and other qualifications. Enrichment through the weekly 'option' and evening activities is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

School staff are committed to ensuring boys have good care and support. Procedures for safeguarding met current government requirements at the time of the inspection. The environment for learning is safe. Effective use is beginning to be made by mentors of the new pupil development plans, and in subjects such as art, good use is made of subject education plans. Boys respond well to the award of 'achievement points', which are used to celebrate their successes. Academic guidance is good with teachers quick to spot potential and address the need. This includes the most able mathematicians who take their examinations early. Boys are encouraged to further their education once they leave the school by attending further education colleges and the good work by the aftercare officer helps pupils make the transition after leaving school. Parents are supportive of the school. Another typical comment is: 'we are amazed at how quickly he has settled'. The boys, too, say that they are well looked after. Inspection evidence supports these views, both in school and in the boarding setting.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership of the school has high expectations for improvement. Over the past few months the governors have supported and accepted the headteacher's appraisal of the school's performance and the identification of the steps necessary to move it on to the next stage of its development. As a result, plans are set in train to improve many aspects of the school's work. The findings of the evaluation are accurate, with inspection evidence matching the school's findings. The school runs smoothly but senior managers spend too much time dealing with day-to-day issues because there are no clear structures that set out lines of responsibility, allied to accountability, at all levels of management. As a result, strategic development is slower

than it might otherwise be and staff potential is not fully exploited. The school works well with its parents. It has the support of many outside agencies such as the connexions service, and of key professionals such as counsellors and psychologists. This promotes community cohesion but there are not enough external links to enable boys to gain a better awareness of the wider community, or the world of work. The school has a strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all boys and their families.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for spending time with me last week. Your school is satisfactory, and it has good features. Several of your parents or guardians told me they are very pleased that you attend Breckenbrough. They see the difference it makes to your lives. Typical comments are that: 'he has gained confidence and is now being encouraged to learn', and: 'we are amazed at how quickly he has settled'. I agree with these views because I saw this for myself. I know you do too.

You make satisfactory progress in your schoolwork. The more time you spend in the school the better you do. Many of you leave with passes in a range of GCSE subjects. You do well in mathematics, though not so well in English, although your teachers are working hard already to find ways to help you improve your writing and reading, which can make such a difference. Your confidence and your self-esteem improve because the school takes care of you well. You usually relate well to others within the school. Mealtimes and 'option' afternoons are examples of this. I have asked the school to ensure you also gain better awareness of the wider community, and your role within it.

My colleague who spent time talking to you and looking at your living arrangements reports that all the things he asked the school to do when he last visited in March have been put in place. You have a well-balanced curriculum and I know that you enjoy art, design and sport. I have asked the school to prepare you more for when you go to work by offering more work related experiences and qualifications. The quality of your work in lessons reflects your good relationships with staff. You respond best when you are busy doing things.

Behind the scenes, the governors are working closely with your headteacher to improve Breckenbrough. I have asked them to change things slightly so that other members of staff help him more closely in running the school each day so that he can spend more time improving the school overall. Your school council has just been re-launched and I'd urge you to give it your full support by using it to let staff and governors know how they can improve things more.

The full report is available online at www.ofsted.gov.uk.