

# Brackenfield Special School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113031
<b>Local Authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	338072
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Jones HMI

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 category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	64
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Michael Burdon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Phil Ormerod
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 December 2006
<b>School address</b>	Bracken Road Long Eaton Nottingham
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The large majority of time was spent looking at learning; 15 lessons were observed; ten teachers were seen; meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, staff. The work of the school was observed, school policies and the school improvement plan were looked at and pupil, staff and 20 parental questionnaires were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- achievement by different groups of pupils
- the impact of specialist status for cognition and learning
- attendance rates and what is being done to improve them
- the quality of monitoring of the school's work.

## Information about the school

Brackenfield is a small school for pupils with a range of special educational needs and disabilities. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties, with a growing number of those with autistic spectrum disorders or social and emotional difficulties. A minority have severe learning difficulties and a very few also have visual or physical impairment. Most pupils enter the school at Key Stages 3 and 4 with increasing admissions into the lower primary years. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups, three pupils are looked after and almost half of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has specialist college status for cognition and learning and a range of awards including International and ECO School status.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Brackenfield is a good school with a happy and welcoming, working atmosphere. Specialist college status has increased the range of therapeutic approaches used to help the pupils and widened the curriculum offered to them, by building excellent partnerships with local schools and businesses. The school has an outstanding knowledge of the local community and does a great deal to promote community cohesion. Within the school, the outstanding levels of care and the consistent behaviour management systems in place enable most pupils to make good progress. The school's detailed specialist tracking system for recording small gains in learning demonstrates good progress made across subjects by different groups of pupils. Pupils enjoy their lessons, most feel safe and most attend school regularly, although a few pupils are persistently absent. The school is working hard to improve attendance, and has appointed a family resource worker whose engagement with parents is excellent and who having a positive impact on attendance rates. All pupils make good progress in their personal development. They know how to stay healthy and safe. Behaviour is good because of clear guidance from staff. Older pupils are achieving well in work related learning as a result of very effective partnerships with local businesses and the community. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and local community. Teaching is good and staff are committed, dedicated and well-trained. Effective use is made of skilled teaching assistants who play an important role in ensuring the well-being and progress of pupils. The highly personalised curriculum is relevant to the different learning needs of pupils, with sufficient emphasis on basic skills; literacy, numeracy and computer skills are combined with a good focus on healthy and safe lifestyles. However, younger pupils do not have sufficient facilities to explore and learn through play because there is no outdoor classroom for them, and older pupils expressed the wish for more outdoor equipment and zoning in the playground. The amount of time available for learning for the oldest pupil is short of the recommended time and time at the start and end of the day is not always used effectively. The headteacher has a clear vision for improving achievement. The staff is a close knit team who all work together well for the benefit of the pupils. Despite some recent staffing difficulties, teachers have taken on extra responsibilities and carried them out well to ensure the smooth running of the school. The governing body is developing a new structure in order to better hold the school to account. The school knows its strengths and what it needs to do to continue to improve; as a result, the school is in a good position to improve further.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

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- Extend and make best use of the amount of taught time available for purposeful learning.
- Implement plans for outdoor learning by providing an outdoor classroom for pupils in Key Stage 1 and more outdoor learning facilities for pupils in other years.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

In lessons different groups of pupils, including those with autism and severe learning difficulties, make equally good progress in learning. Pupils were seen focusing on their work, listening carefully, trying hard and taking a pride in the work they produced. Pupils make good gains in literacy, numeracy and computer skills as they move through the school so that by the leave they all gain externally accredited certificates of achievement.

Pupils with varying degrees of autism make good progress in communication and social interaction skills because methods and approaches to learning are adapted to their needs. Those with behaviour, social or emotional difficulties make good progress in improving their behaviour because behaviour management strategies are nearly always effective.

Attainment is not graded because of the special educational needs and disabilities of the pupils. The oldest pupils achieve success in a wide range of examination courses including GCSE mathematics and art. Pupils make good progress in the new vocational courses, introduced since the last inspection.

Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles well because they take part in fitness sessions every day. Meals offered by the school are well balanced and pupils understand what is meant by a healthy diet, although they do not always put their knowledge into practice. They have secure knowledge about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and understand the physical changes that occur at puberty.

Most of the pupils spoken to say they feel safe in school and the pupil questionnaires from the younger pupils confirmed this. A few older pupils were less positive but they all felt there was an adult they could talk to if they had a problem and they reported that bullying was dealt with effectively. Pupils know the school rules well and demonstrate this by treating staff and each other with respect.

Pupils act as school council representatives and sports leaders. They contribute to the wider community by raising money for charity, working alongside a local council to take care of a nearby park, acting as sports leaders and participating in a range of projects with local schools.

Pupils are prepared well for the world of work through well-organised and valuable work experience. Social interaction and communication skills develop well as they move through the school and all go on to training or college placements.

Pupils have a well developed understanding of right and wrong. They care for each other and have a good understanding of other cultures fostered by the school's work on the International Award. Their spiritual awareness is well developed. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 8 art lesson, where pupils were enthralled by the original and

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high quality work they were producing and could discuss the beliefs of the aboriginal people which had acted as a stimulus for their work.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers know their pupils very well and treat them with respect. Any incidents of poor behaviour are managed well with the minimum amount of disruption for other pupils. Teachers are greatly supported in their work by well trained and skilful teaching assistants. Activities and tasks are well-matched to need and pupils are generally provided with interesting and enjoyable tasks which motivate them and help them to learn. Computers are used well to promote independent learning. For example in an outstanding Year 7 lesson, pupils confidently answered questions in Spanish using a language software program. Occasionally, planning for lessons is not clear or detailed enough and this results in slower pace and pupils not being sufficiently challenged.

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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The youngest pupils follow a curriculum based on the Primary National Strategy while the oldest pupils have more opportunities for vocational learning. The amount of taught time for older pupils is a little under that usually found, and pastoral time is over-extended and not always used effectively. Although the outside learning environment is limited for the younger pupils, the school has plans in place to develop this.

Specialist status in cognition and learning has had a positive impact on the curriculum, through, for example, more opportunities to learn alongside mainstream school peers. Equally, a wider range of opportunities to enrich learning are available to pupils through a good range of lunchtime clubs.

The personal, social and health education programme promotes pupils' personal development effectively, through, for example, teaching about relationships, how to travel safely on the bus to school and the dangers of cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug abuse.

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of everything the school offers. The work of professionals in the school, such as the family resource worker, the school counsellor, the speech therapist and medical professionals are highly effective in ensuring pupils are happy, stay safe and healthy in school. Regular home visits have led to excellent work with parents to resolve any issues which have a negative impact on pupils' learning and welfare.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Monitoring of teaching and evaluation of the school's work is accurate and the leadership team have planned effectively what the school needs to do to improve further.

The governing body is enthusiastic and supportive of the work of the school and is reviewing its committee system in order to challenge more effectively.

The school provides good value for money and has plans to use the current underspend to improve provision. The school is in the process of gaining the financial management in schools award.

Partnerships with local schools are outstanding and have brought benefits and opportunities both for pupils and staff at this school and at the partner schools.

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The school adopts good practice across all aspects of safeguarding and has effective procedures in place. Senior leaders work pro-actively to deal with any situations which may arise.

Equal opportunities are promoted well and the school has a very good understanding of pupils' individual needs. However, no formal impact assessment has been carried out by the governing body.

The school has an excellent plan for links with the wider community which it carries out well through teaching about civic responsibility, reaching out to support parents, providing outreach work for other schools in behaviour management and promoting environmental and international issues.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Of the 20 parents who returned questionnaires the large majority feel that their children enjoy school and that they are well cared for and safe. They are positive about the school and appreciate what is being done for their children. As one wrote, 'This school is excellent for my child and they help him to develop socially and well as educationally. The teaching staff and school management deserve praise and commendation.' Inspectors' observations support parents' views. A few of negative comments were made but inspectors did not find evidence to support these.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brackenfield Special School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	85	2	10	1	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	50	10	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	50	9	45	0	0	1	5
The teaching is good at this school	13	65	6	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	40	11	55	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	40	11	55	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	6	30	10	50	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	55	6	30	2	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	60	5	25	2	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	40	11	55	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	75	4	20	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	70	5	25	1	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



11 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brackenfield Special School, Nottingham, NG10 4DA

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 9 and 10 February. We enjoyed talking with you. Brackenfield is a good school. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school.

You are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; you behave well, are polite and friendly and kind to others.

You are making good progress in improving your behaviour and developing self-confidence.

You work hard and make good progress in your schoolwork. Many of you do really well in your examinations.

You told us that you feel very safe in school and are very well looked after; there is excellent care and support for all of you.

The school is very well led and managed, and works in an outstanding way with local schools.

Teaching is good. You like and respect your teachers and teaching assistants.

You enjoy the good range of sports, arts and other activities provided for you in school and at lunchtime.

This is how we thought the school could get even better.

Spend more time on learning, perhaps by starting lessons earlier in the morning.

Provide the younger pupils with an outdoor classroom and all of you with more outdoor facilities and zoning in the playground for different activities.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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