

Inspection of Breckenbrough School

Sandhutton, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 4EN

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Breckenbrough School is a calm and nurturing place. Pupils benefit from warm relationships and an ethos of positively resolving conflict. This helps them to regulate and improve their behaviour. Pupils' experience is significantly enhanced by their personal keyworker. Pupils trust and respect this adult who supports them. They are safe and happy in their school. Over time, pupils make strong progress in their social skills. Older students mentor younger pupils. Pupils from all age groups enjoy playing sport together at lunchtime.

Pupils enjoy an increasingly effective academic curriculum. They are proud to share their work and achievements. In the sixth form, students are confident learners. Several go on to achieve places at prestigious universities. With guidance, pupils set personal goals. This helps staff match learning and care to pupils' unique and varied interests.

Personal development is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils are carefully encouraged to become increasingly independent and adventurous. They flourish in an exceptional outdoor education curriculum. In these weekly sessions, they experience caving, climbing, canoeing and more. Pupils develop important character traits. These include teamwork and confidence. They use these transferrable skills to overcome other challenges in their lives.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Breckenbrough staff are experts in the needs of their pupils. They use this knowledge to support learning in a meaningful way. The school regularly surveys families and pupils. It gathers important information about pupils' feelings and concerns. The school uses this information to set targets with the pupils. Staff refer to the targets throughout the school. This includes in academic lessons. It helps pupils make effective progress through the curriculum.

In lessons, pupils enjoy positive relationships with their teachers. This supports them in meeting the school's high academic expectations. The school's curriculum sets out the important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn. Pupils commit well to this learning. In English, they are proud to share their descriptive writing. Pupils in Year 11 use a range of ambitious and well-chosen vocabulary to enhance their work. However, in some subjects, the school has not matched assessment to the curriculum it has designed. This limits the depth of understanding staff have about pupils' learning and progress. In addition, the curriculums in the primary and secondary phases are not linked effectively. Pupils do not build on prior learning as well as they could as they move up through the school.

The school places a high priority on the importance of reading. Pupils in the primary phase enjoy a curriculum based around engaging texts. Students in the sixth form also enjoy wider reading linked to their subjects. Some pupils struggle with reading. The school uses effective systems to identify these pupils quickly. A range of

strategies then helps them catch up with their peers. The school has recently introduced phonics for younger pupils. This needs further development but is beginning to have a positive impact. Sixth-form students are proud to act as reading mentors. They support younger pupils to gain confidence in reading aloud.

Quaker values are the foundation of the school's ethos. This underpins the school's approach to behaviour management. Core values, such as tolerance, forgiveness and reflection, are taught. When instances of poor behaviour do happen, staff act swiftly and calmly. Pupils appreciate this approach. They feel secure and respected in the school. Pupils are confident their keyworker will help them resolve any issues, if they occur.

Pupils enjoy regular lessons that focus on their personal, social, health and religious education. These are carefully planned from primary to secondary. This ensures pupils learn about the wider world. Students in the sixth form enjoy independent living skills sessions. They learn to cook, budget and drive. The school adapts relationships and sex education to individual sixth-form students' needs. However, students lack regular planned opportunities to learn about this important area.

Pupils enjoy Wednesday afternoon enrichment and extended school days. They benefit from trips to universities, cathedrals and the theatre. Furthermore, pupils enjoy a comprehensive careers education. From Year 5 upwards, they learn about potential next steps. Students in the sixth form have personalised support. They follow routes into employment and apprenticeships as well as higher education.

Leaders have improved the quality of education since the last inspection. The staff team is a cohesive unit that puts the pupils and their needs at the centre of every decision. Staff feel valued in their work and know they make a difference for pupils. Governors support the school well. A significant majority of parents are full of praise for the school. One parent represented the views of many when they said, 'It is like Breckenbrough was made for my son.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, assessment is not closely matched to the aims of the curriculum. The school does not understand how effectively pupils are acquiring the knowledge and skills they have identified. The school should intensify its actions to review and improve assessment strategies.
- The curriculums in the primary and secondary phases are not coherently linked. Pupils in key stage 2 are not as prepared as they could be for their next steps, and pupils in key stage 3 do not consistently build on prior knowledge. The school

should ensure there is continuity in the curriculum and that this is understood well by staff.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	121765
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10313558
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ruth McTighe
Headteacher	Simon Bannister
Website	www.breckenbrough.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 November 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Breckenbrough School is a residential special school for boys with autism. Most boys attend as day pupils only.
- Pupils are admitted from any local authority in England.
- The school is a Quaker Charitable Trust and has a Quaker ethos.
- The school uses nine alternative providers of education for a small number of pupils. Three of these providers are registered and six are unregistered.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders over the course of the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body and one other governor. They reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes from governor meetings.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the leader responsible for sixth form. The inspectors also spent time in sixth-form lessons across the course of the inspection.
- An inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with the leaders responsible for personal development.
- The lead inspector made telephone calls to two unregistered alternative providers that work with the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors met with groups of pupils formally throughout the inspection and spoke with them informally at social times and in lessons.
- A range of school documents were reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff gathered through Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Hannah Millett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Zoe Westley

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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