



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Brackenfield School

June 2023

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School's Details

School	Brackenfield School			
DfE number	815/6027			
Address	Brackenfield School 128 Duchy Road Harrogate North Yorkshire HG1 2HE			
Telephone number	01423 508558			
Email address	admin@brackenfieldschool.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Joe Masterson			
Chair of governors	Mr John Forsyth			
Proprietor	Forfar Education Ltd			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	149			
	EYFS	55	Infants	34
	Juniors	60		
Inspection dates	6 to 8 June 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Brackenfield School is an independent school located near the centre of Harrogate. Established in 1977, the school has been owned since 2019 by Forfar Education, whose directors provide governance. The school has an advisory board, comprising the head, representatives of the governing body and parents of the school.
- 1.2 The school consists of three sections: the nursery for children aged two to four years; the infants for pupils aged four to seven; and the juniors for those aged seven to eleven. The current head was appointed in August 2020.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to promote a lifelong love of learning through the provision of a rich and varied range of collaborative experiences in its mission areas of curriculum, activities, outdoor learning and community. It seeks to teach its pupils how to work with nature and the environment and to enable them to learn about and serve their local and wider communities.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Most pupils come from professional and business families in Harrogate and the surrounding area. Assessment data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils on entry to the school is average when compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 9 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and autistic spectrum conditions, all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or English as an additional language. The school provides for the needs of pupils identified as being more able or talented through classroom and extra-curricular activities.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils make excellent progress and develop advanced levels of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils achieve considerable success in their academic and other endeavours.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning, demonstrating outstanding levels of collaboration in their work.
- Pupils have excellent communication skills which enhance their learning across the curriculum.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-confidence, self-knowledge and self-esteem.
- Pupils' moral understanding is excellent, reflecting their strong commitment to and consistent implementation of the school's values.
- Pupils' social development is excellent, as is their contribution to the school and local community.
- Pupils display a mature understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Enable pupils to take a lead in their learning through increased opportunities to decide what or how they will learn.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils of all abilities make excellent progress. They achieve at levels in advance of expectations for their ages and abilities, as reflected in their success in gaining places at selective senior schools. Children in the EYFS make rapid progress from their start points, and continue to do so as they move through the infant and junior departments. Pupils with SEND make similar or better progress to their peers, often from considerably lower starting points. Those who are more able achieve high and occasionally exceptional standards. This is because leaders' effective monitoring of teaching and learning and high expectations of both staff and pupils ensures pupils throughout the school make the best possible progress. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, all pupils and parents who responded

agreed that teaching enables pupils' progress. Pupils also said that their teachers' feedback and marking helps them to improve. Inspection evidence supports these positive views, confirming that teachers' effective use of assessment data to inform planning ensures the needs of all pupils are met. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy their lessons, which were observed to be characterised by well-paced and engaging teaching, prompting pupils to readily embody the school's value of perseverance.

- 3.6 Pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding to a high level across the curriculum, benefiting from the school's success in fulfilling its aim to provide a rich and varied curriculum. They demonstrate excellent knowledge in the humanities and the ability to apply and extend their understanding through scientific experiments. Their accomplished artistic abilities are evident in the displays around the school, and they perform with skill and poise in both musical and dramatic performances. Pupils readily and easily transfer their skills across different subject areas, this being encouraged by the school's practice of making connections between different curriculum areas. This was seen in a music lesson, when Year 3 pupils spoke with authority about the Tudors before learning a recorder piece to play for the forthcoming production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate depth and maturity in their understanding, due to the provision of support and challenge in their lessons and the use of effective questioning. Their achievements in subjects including English, mathematics, music, sport and French benefits from leaders' judicious use of specialist teaching and teachers' excellent subject knowledge. This was exemplified in Year 5's proficient written work in French which ranged from telling the time to writing poetry.
- 3.7 Pupils achieve at an excellent level in a wide variety of fields, benefiting from the school's success in fulfilling its aim to provide an array of individual and collective events and enriching experiences. All parents who completed the questionnaires agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. This view was shared by pupils interviewed; inspectors found the extra-curricular programme to be carefully nuanced so as to provide pupils with new experiences and foster their individual talents. Pupils are quick to engage in new activities and then pursue them to the highest level on a personal basis outside school. In recent years, pupils have achieved local and national success in archery, cross country and football, having begun their sporting activities within the school. Others have extended their skills beyond the school gates at an international level in athletics and bobsleigh. Pupils throughout the school are successful in music and drama examinations, sport and art. They perform to a high level in school productions and both junior and infant choirs have achieved first place in the Harrogate music festival. A significant proportion of pupils gain academic, music and art scholarships to their senior schools.
- 3.8 Pupils' attitudes to their work are excellent. From the earliest age, they invariably engage with commitment and enthusiasm in their learning. They work independently and are extremely productive when collaborating with others, which they do almost constantly throughout the day. Pupils of all ages successfully co-operate in science investigations, online research and countless discussions of their ideas. Children in the Nursery confidently select and engage in activities, responding confidently to the sensitive provision of a combination of guided and independent options. Older pupils demonstrate a pride in their work through its careful and thorough completion and neat presentation. Pupils readily display initiative when working independently or with others; however, opportunities for them to decide what they will learn about are relatively limited in scope. As a result, their learning in wider aspects of the curriculum and in areas which they have chosen to explore themselves is not fully developed.
- 3.9 Pupils' speaking and listening skills are excellent and are utilised to great effect throughout the school day. Pupils in Year 3 demonstrated fluency and descriptive powers in their inquisitive and enthusiastic discussion of news reports. Those in Year 5 listened with great attention to others explaining their feelings about their faith. Pupils are equally proficient in more formal situations such as debating club, where their use of appropriate language is extremely well developed. They develop excellent performance skills, as seen in their productions and speech and drama examination successes. Pupils develop a love of reading from a young age, and older pupils speak with enthusiasm about their

choices, demonstrating a mature understanding for their age of what they have read. Their often ambitious choices of material are encouraged by classroom challenges such as matching authors to books, including writers such as J.R.R.Tolkien and Emily Bronte. Pupils develop high levels of proficiency in their writing, as seen in their factual and fictional writing on subjects ranging from atmospheric stories to book reviews and the diary of Howard Carter. The pupils of Year 2 were awarded first prize in a national handwriting competition, and the content of their writing is of an equally high standard on topics such as trip reports and biographies of Louis Braille. Pupils' writing skills enhance their achievements in a wide range of subjects and are often brought to life through the medium of film.

- 3.10 Pupils of all ages are highly competent and confident mathematicians; many having achieved considerable success in national mathematics challenges in recent years. They take a delight in their abilities to explore and manipulate number, with some displaying an exceptional level of understanding for their age. Children develop their understanding of number from the EYFS, where the most able pupils are encouraged to use their skills to tackle word-based problems. Children in the infant department demonstrate advanced understanding in their work on fractions and measurement and a growing confidence and agility with number through the purposeful activities provided before the start of the school day. These saw pupils consolidating and utilising their skills by engaging in electronic times tables challenges and adding up their scores in a *Scrabble* task. Older pupils demonstrate high levels of proficiency in work and apply this productively to other subjects. This was seen when Year 5 pupils used their measuring skills in a friction investigation. Pupils in Year 6 combined their mathematical abilities with their design technology (DT) and information communication technology (ICT) skills to create games of chance and calculate the probability of winning.
- 3.11 Pupils' ICT skills are excellent, and are applied effectively across the curriculum. Children in the EYFS swiftly become familiar with electronic devices when photographing their work. Their familiarity with the use of electronic devices in their work is accelerated due to the governors' provision of a wide range of resources and reliable internet access. As they progress through the school, pupils acquire advanced coding skills, using these to produce quizzes and artwork and to control models. They make rapid progress in their lessons, as seen when Year 4 pupils produced accurate coding instructions to create a model by the end of their first lesson on the topic. Pupils of all ages benefit from the expertise afforded by specialist teaching as well as many opportunities to use their skills in other subjects. This was seen in Year 5 pupils' work about the structure of the earth, which was enhanced by the use of ICT and photography. Pupils' use of ICT to bring their work to life is excellent, exemplified in their animations of Tudor monarchs and their use of cameras and green screens to create news reports.
- 3.12 Pupils demonstrate excellent study skills. They make confident, well-informed hypotheses in science experiments, and regularly analyse their own work with insight in order to find means of improving their efforts. Year 3 pupils displayed excellent study skills in their discussions when planning a news report about a dragon being in the school. They analysed what had happened incisively and, with maturity beyond their years, conjectured what might happen with the dragon's egg. Pupils synthesise information with ease, presenting their findings swiftly and succinctly on topics such as smart phone ownership and how to stop smoking. They explain their thinking with clarity. Pupils make connections quickly and intelligently in response to the wide range of challenging activities in their lessons. An example was seen when Year 6 pupils demonstrated highly developed skills of analysis and synthesis when discussing the order in which to place different forms of crime and punishment over time. They used their prior historical knowledge to inform their decisions, readily revising these when presented with additional information in the form of pictures and historical periods.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-esteem from the youngest age, encouraged by the school's celebration of their successes. They are not afraid to make mistakes in the pursuit of learning, fully demonstrating the school's value of confidence in their approaches to learning and to life. Pupils are self-reflective, with an objective awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, benefiting from the school's strong focus on pupils' individual strengths. Pupils make excellent use of the highly effective feedback provided by their teachers and engage productively in assessment of their own and each other's work. They talk knowledgeably about how to improve and willingly review and redraft their work in order to perfect it to the highest possible standard. Pupils' excellent understanding and appreciation of the importance of the school's values prepares them extremely well for the next stages in their lives, something which they enunciate themselves with maturity and self-understanding. This is because of the consistent promotion of a coherent ethos by leaders, governors and adults working in the school and their daily discussion and practical application by staff, pupils and parents.
- 3.15 Pupils embody the school aim of community throughout the school day in their dealings with others, demonstrating a secure social awareness from the Nursery onwards. Pupils of all ages spontaneously offer help to others in practical and academic contexts. They relish opportunities to work together on charitable events, theme days and house events and speak with commitment and appreciation of the school values which unite them in a common purpose with the whole school community. All pupils responding to the questionnaires agreed that the school teaches them how to build positive relationships and friendships. Inspectors wholeheartedly agree with this view, finding that this is enabled by the many opportunities for pupils of different ages to work together. Children in Reception demonstrated excellent social awareness through their conversations about snack time, whilst those in Year 1 collaborated and took turns when playing games during registration. Older pupils act as excellent role models to younger one, taking their lead from staff, who demonstrate and promote collaboration and support for others throughout the school. They clearly demonstrate the school value of initiative when supporting younger ones on a daily basis in the playground and as weekly reading buddies. Focused activities regularly provide opportunities for pupils in the infant department to work alongside each other, with those in Year 2 eager to help children in Reception. Pupils of all ages take a pride in their collaborative achievements as a school, such as the hanging mobile of butterflies, produced during the whole school art week.
- 3.16 Pupils contribute positively and daily to the lives of others through their support of each other in the school community, fulfilling responsibly a wide range of meaningful roles. They demonstrate strong economic, environmental and social awareness for their ages through opportunities to engage in significant activities that benefit others and through charitable enterprises. Older pupils are particularly active in their roles as house, sports and other captains. The school council members ensure that the voices of all are heard through their consultations with others, and have initiated the implementation of some much-appreciated changes in the school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were confident that the council is an effective force for change, reflecting the readiness of school leaders to listen to the voices of pupils, staff and parents. Pupils make a contribution to the lives of others in the local community through regular visits to a local care home, performances in the town and support of local charities. In this, the school is highly successful in fulfilling its aim to enable pupils to learn about, serve and support their local community. Their fundraising efforts for national and international causes are equally important to the pupils, although not yet so wide-ranging in scope.
- 3.17 Pupils develop an excellent understanding of how to stay safe online and in the wider world through their learning in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and ICT lessons and their links to other subjects such as science and physical education. All parents who answered the questionnaire agreed that the school encourages their child to adopt a healthy lifestyle, a view which is strongly supported by inspection evidence. Pupils speak with authority about the importance of a healthy diet and the means by which the school lunches support them in maintaining this. They demonstrate a mature

understanding of the importance of healthy relationships and of sharing their concerns with others in order to support their own mental health. In discussions, pupils spoke confidently about the means by which they can help themselves stay mentally and physically healthy. They were eager to share their practical knowledge on topics ranging from online safety to practical dangers, including what to do if stung by a jellyfish.

- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of the importance of wise decision-making and its role in determining their future successes. Pupils in Year 5 talked confidently to an inspector about the upcoming challenge of moving on to senior school and the strong support offered by the school as they prepare to decide on their futures. Pupils enjoy opportunities to choose the books they read, the level of challenge to work at in class and which medium to use in art. They respond positively when asked to select the topic of their choice for research projects, although such opportunities are not widely offered. Pupils understand the importance of choosing wisely when voting for school council members and when making the decision to stand for these positions themselves. Pupils in Year 3 demonstrated a good understanding of the democratic process through the work in their PSHE books, and those in Year 2 were able to explain the means by which voting confidentiality can be ensured.
- 3.19 Pupils have an excellent appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. They speak regularly and spontaneously about the importance of the school values in their lives, relating them with ease to the challenges which life may hold. Pupils strongly value opportunities to engage with other children, talking enthusiastically about the many ways they do this in school. They value their environment, experienced through outdoor learning activities, and are keen to do everything they can to look after it. Pupils show a deep appreciation of opportunities to learn about the lives of others. Pupils spoke with great sincerity about the importance of spending time with those of different ages in school and of the spaces provided in school for quiet reflection. They demonstrate a well-developed sense of empathy towards others. This was seen in a registration session in Year 4, where pupils gained insight into the term through the context of an alien joining the school. Pupils demonstrate a well-developed aesthetic awareness as evidenced in displays around the school. Pupils in Year 6 showed a deep appreciation for each other's paintings inspired by Lowry's landscapes of Harrogate alongside an understanding of how the landscape has changed over time.
- 3.20 Pupils have an excellent moral awareness, rooted firmly in their adherence to the school values of kindness and respect. They understand the importance of rules, but talk of these as the strongest guide for their behaviour towards others. Pupils understand that mistakes can be made and readily explain that the value of honesty is key when acknowledging these and righting any wrongs. Older pupils explained with understanding beyond their years that privileges come with responsibilities and that these can be rescinded if expectations drop below agreed standards. Pupils display a strong moral compass, confidently expressing their understanding of fairness in discussions and debates. Their extremely well-established levels of respect towards others enables them to present their views with vigour whilst not offending or upsetting those with different perspectives. Pupils' interactions with adults are characterised by an equally strong understanding of appropriate behaviour and boundaries, as seen when pupils in Year 3 challenged the headmaster in lively games of speed chess in a lunchtime activity.
- 3.21 Pupils demonstrate a strong awareness that the lives of others may be different from their own and a thirst for knowledge and understanding of other cultures and beliefs. They support and encourage those in need of help in both academic and social contexts, clearly exemplifying the school's value of kindness. Pupils' behaviour towards those who are different from themselves convincingly evidences the school's consistent promotion of respect, which is fostered through their PSHE lessons. This is reflected in the views of all parents who answered the questionnaires, who agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. Pupils appreciate times when their peers share their own cultures and visits which enhance their knowledge of other faiths. This was seen in a religious education lesson, when pupils in Year 5 demonstrated great sensitivity and

tolerance when debating different beliefs, using terms such as theist, agnostic and atheist with dexterity to describe the differing views of others.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Karen Williams	Reporting inspector
Mrs Joanne Speight	Compliance team inspector (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school)
Mr David Williams	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)