

Brackenfield School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	815/6027
Unique reference number	121757
URN for registered childcare and social care	EY305335
Inspection number	334994
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Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI

Age group: 2-11

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision³ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.⁴

Information about the school

Brackenfield School is a co-educational preparatory school situated on the edge of Harrogate. It provides care and education for children aged two to 11 years of age. There are currently 170 pupils on roll including 38 part-time pupils in the Nursery. There are 18 children in the Pre-Nursery class. The school was established in 1977 and is accommodated in an early Edwardian house, although there have been more modern additions to the building. There are currently 32 children who are funded under the Nursery education scheme. There is a breakfast club from 7.30am to 8.30am and an after-school club until 6.00pm each evening. The school was last inspected in January 2007. The last inspection for registered childcare was in February 2006.

The school aims to 'make children happy and confident, to make the most of individual talents and for every child to leave the school with high self-esteem, ready for the next challenge.'

Evaluation of the school

Brackenfield School provides a good quality of education and care for its pupils and meets its aims effectively, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The curriculum and the quality of teaching and assessment are good enabling pupils to make good progress in their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are outstanding and, as a result, they develop into well-rounded, confident and articulate young people. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding; safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and meet requirements. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school and have successfully addressed the vast majority of the issues identified at the last inspection and as a result, the school now

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49

meets all of the regulations for independent school registration. The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good in school and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is broad and balanced and ensures that pupils of all abilities make good progress. The school teaches all subjects in the National Curriculum; it has a strong focus on developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the core subjects and on using these skills effectively in cross-curricular work. Pupils from Nursery to Year 6 learn French. Pupils are able to participate in a wide range of sports and musical activities and are highly successful in inter-school sports competitions, swimming galas and music festivals. There are ample opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and pupils are able to articulate their views and opinions with confidence. By the end of Year 3, an increasing number of subjects are taught by subject specialists. Information and communication technology (ICT) is well used by pupils to support their learning. The small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or English as an additional language, are catered for well with additional tuition from a learning support teacher and teaching assistants enabling them to make good progress. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme (PSHCE) includes a wide variety of activities which successfully promote pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils are enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer and appreciate the opportunity to develop further their sporting, creative and communication skills.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good in school and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and, as a result, pupils make good progress. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils and pupils are highly motivated to learn. They take a pride in their work and present it neatly. Teachers have good subject knowledge and ask probing questions that promote pupils' thinking skills. Pupils are expected to give reasons for their answers and they listen to and respect each other's views and opinions. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and say that they are fun. They have good opportunities to work independently as well as in groups and pairs which enables them to discuss their work with others. They are also developing good practical skills, for example, in science and design and technology. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and as a result, pupils are able to concentrate well and participate in activities with enthusiasm. Work is matched well to the individual abilities of pupils.

Assessment arrangements, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are good. Improvements have been made to the tracking system since the last inspection and it is used well to identify pupils who require additional support or challenge. Pupils make good progress because of the individual support they receive. However, there is no clear overview or analysis of the progress that all groups of pupils make year-on-year from their starting points. Staff know pupils very well and appropriate information is available but this is fragmented and not presented in a

fully cohesive manner. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the assessment of children's learning is good, but opportunities are sometimes missed to record incidental learning.

Pupils make good progress because of the good curriculum and teaching they receive. Evidence seen in pupils' work and in lessons confirms this view. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they are all successful in gaining places at the selective senior schools of their choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding in school and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils have developed into very confident, articulate and well-rounded individuals. This outstanding personal development begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage when children settle in quickly and make good friends. There are many opportunities to celebrate pupils' achievements and this does much to promote pupils' high self-esteem. Pupils say they really enjoy their learning. Attendance is usually high, although at the time of the inspection a number of pupils were absent because of swine flu. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is exemplary. They are extremely courteous and polite. Pupils take their responsibilities as monitors, house captains and school councillors very seriously. They make an excellent contribution to the wider community through a range of fund-raising activities for charity and, for example, through visiting a local residence for elderly people. Older pupils enjoy participating in Young Enterprise projects, for example, by growing herbs to raise money. Pupils gain a good understanding of British institutions and services by visiting the local council offices, learning about local and national government and the work of the police and fire service. Cultural development and racial harmony are very effectively promoted and a range of different festivals are celebrated including Diwali and Chinese New Year. Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education and for their future lives. This is aided by the good progress they make in their basic skills, their ability to engage in teamwork, particularly in problem-solving activities, and their high levels of confidence and self-esteem.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding in school and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is reflected in pupils' in-depth understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. The very good provision for sport not only increases fitness levels, but instils an understanding of the use of appropriate equipment to avoid injury, such as gum shields for rugby. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the well-balanced lunches provided and have a comprehensive understanding of healthy eating. Their understanding of keeping safe is excellent. They are acutely aware of potential hazards, for example, on the road, water or

when using the internet. As a result of adults' focus on safety in lessons, pupils understand the precautions needed, for example, when working with tools in design and technology lessons.

All the required policies and procedures are in place and are regularly updated against national recommendations. There are thorough procedures to ensure that safeguarding and child protection policies are in place. Staff training is up-to-date; staff have a good understanding of policies and procedures and implement them very effectively. Any issues raised by annual checks, including health and safety checks, are addressed immediately. Daily checks of the building and grounds by the principal and site manager allow for any potential hazards to be remedied immediately. Detailed assessments of potential risks for visits and activities in and out of school are diligently undertaken. The school has a comprehensive development plan in place in respect of accessibility to the premises with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The arrangements for early morning and after-school care meet requirements. Pupils are cared for very well and there is good communication with staff in school.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has established suitable procedures for ensuring that, prior to taking up their responsibilities, all teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers, supply staff and the proprietor are checked for their suitability to work with children and young people. This has improved since the previous inspection. All required checks including an enhanced criminal records bureau check have been completed for those in regular contact with pupils and these are kept, as required, in a single central record.

School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation is fit for purpose and is maintained to a good level. The school is situated in well-maintained grounds which have recently been improved. A woodland area has been opened up and a climbing wall has been erected and these contribute well to pupils' agility and fitness levels. Classrooms are of a good size and the school has good resources including interactive whiteboards in all classes which contribute well to pupils' motivation and learning. There is a hall, separate ICT suite and library areas. The improved playing fields have extended the range of sports available and are contributing to pupils' skills and achievements at school, local and county level.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information has improved since the last inspection and now meets requirements. It provides parents, carers and others with a wide range of up-to-date

information through the handbook for parents and the website. There is also a high quality published magazine which provides a wide variety of information in respect of pupils' achievements including musical and sporting achievements, prizes and awards given and samples of work produced by pupils in each class. The vast majority of parents are pleased with the education and care provided for their children and, as one parent states, 'This is a happy school where children have access to a wide variety of activities, the staff are caring and enthusiastic and the parents are made to feel part of the school'.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints policy and a set of procedures, which meet all of the regulations. There have been no formal complaints since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and some aspects are outstanding including the promotion of children's welfare and their personal development. Children enjoy their time in the Pre-Nursery, Nursery and Reception classes and make good progress in all areas of learning. Their progress and achievement in personal and social development and in music is excellent. Through the good provision, children settle quickly, becoming familiar with routines, confidently making new friends and relishing the wide range of activities available. The improvements to the outdoor provision have added to children's enjoyment and this was evident in the huge fun they had acting as pirates. As in other areas of school, each child is truly valued as an individual. Close work with parents compiling 'special books' of children's life stories give children an understanding of the passage of time, and encourage their desire to read. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers and support staff work effectively as a team. Planning takes account of all areas of learning, but planning for the outdoor area is not as focused as for the indoor provision. Adults know their children well and endeavour to provide activities that promote each child's knowledge and skills. The assessment and recording of children's achievements is undertaken conscientiously, but opportunities are sometimes missed to record incidental learning. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, but is shared between the Nursery manager and the Key Stage 1 leader. This has resulted in additional demands, especially in the management of the Reception Class. All the welfare requirements are met, including those for two year olds.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Develop tracking systems further to ensure that leaders and managers have a clear overview of the amount of progress made by all groups of pupils' year-on-year from their starting points.
- Refine assessment procedures in the Early Years Foundation Stage especially in the day-to-day recording of incidental learning.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	√			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	√			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	√			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	√			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	√			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?	√			
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?	√			
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?	√			
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?	√			

School details

Name of school	Brackenfield School		
DCSF number	815/6027		
Unique reference number	121757		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY305335		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1 September 1977		
Age range of pupils	2-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 71	Girls: 61	Total: 132
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 19	Girls: 19	Total: 38
Number of pupils aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 9	Girls: 9	Total: 18
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 5,985		
Annual fees (childcare)	£ 1,875		
Address of school	128 Duchy Road Harrogate North Yorkshire HG1 2HE		
Telephone number	01423 508558		
Fax number	01423 524841		
Email address	admin@brackenfieldschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Skillington		
Proprietor	Mr Anthony Comerford		
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI		
Dates of inspection	11-12 November 2009		