

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust

INSPECTION REPORT

INSPECTION CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO SECTION 162A
OF THE EDUCATION ACT 2002

Name of school:	Brownberrie
DfE number: FOCUS number:	383/6122 208
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell Supporting Inspectors: Mr Simon Bennett Mr Tony Hubbard Lay Inspector: Mr David Kilbey
Dates of inspection:	4 – 7 October 2010

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: Brownberrie

Address of school: 27, Church Street, Boston Spa,
LS23 6DX

Telephone number: 01937 849636

Fax number: 01937 844201

Email address: brownberrie.admin@focuslearningorg.com

Proprietor: Brownberrie Education Trust

Name of Chief Executive Officer: Mr Roger Edwards

Name of Senior Teacher: Mrs Karen Kitchener

DfE number: 383/6122

FOCUS number: 208

Type of school: Independent school affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust

Age range of pupils and students: 7 - 18

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll: (Full time) Boys: 46 Girls: 29

Number of post-16 students: Boys: 11 Girls: 6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational need: Boys: 0 Girls: 0

Annual fees: Not applicable

Type of inspection: Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell

Supporting Inspector(s): Mr Simon Bennett
Mr Tony Hubbard

Lay Inspector: Mr David Kilbey

Dates of inspection: 4 – 7 October 2010

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service in accordance with Section 162(A) (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by the Service and the Focus Learning Trust and agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). It was conducted by independent professional inspectors who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations. The professional inspectors were accompanied by a trained lay inspector who looked at agreed aspects of the school's management and ethos and reported on these to the Focus Learning Trust. His findings are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection process.

Information about the school:

Brownberrie is an independent school of special religious character for boys and girls, situated in the ancient spa town of Boston Spa in West Yorkshire. Pupils are of mixed academic ability. It moved to its present semi-rural situation near to the centre of the town in January 2010, following relocation from its former urban site in Leeds. A primary department was established at the school in September 2010. These pupils formerly travelled to a Brethren school in Middlesbrough or attended local maintained primary schools. There are currently seventy-five pupils attending the school between the ages of 7 and 18, thirty-one of whom are in the primary department. There are currently no pupils with statements of special education needs, although four pupils are identified by the school as requiring varying degrees of support for learning difficulties. The school's aims are *'through the quality of teaching and learning we strive to empower students, to recognise their self-worth and reach their potential; to work towards maturity; to become men and women of moral integrity and courage; to respect the dignity of others'*.

Summary of main findings:

Brownberrie School successfully meets its aims. The school has moved to its new site with minimal disruption, and the primary department has been successfully established adjacent to the secondary school and is already providing a good quality of education. Overall, the school provides its pupils with a high quality of education in a bright, secure and stimulating learning environment. The curriculum provides a suitably wide range of learning opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities. Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils of all ages are provided with a range of stimulating learning experiences. The school caters exceptionally well through its provision for each pupil's individual academic and personal needs. Procedures for safeguarding students and for ensuring a high quality of pupil welfare are in place and effectively implemented. Pupils are very well cared for and are encouraged to live healthy lives. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The high quality of the school's provision is acknowledged by both pupils and parents. The school has improved since the last inspection and now meets all the requirements of the independent school regulations, as well as fully complying with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

What the school does well:

- pupils are very well prepared for their future lives and economic well-being;
- it provides teaching of an overall outstandingly high quality in which the pupils recognise the support provided by their teachers, particularly in the secondary part of the school; and
- it provides a cohesive atmosphere where trustees and teaching staff work together harmoniously for the benefit of the pupils.

Next Steps

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points:

- the establishment of a library or learning centre to extend further the reading and learning opportunities for secondary pupils;
- the further development of systems for tracking pupils' progress and for target setting to enhance the effectiveness of the established good assessment procedures;
- the alignment of practices between the secondary and primary parts of the school in order to further the school's intention to operate as one.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. The curriculum is set out clearly in school documentation, including in the prospectus available to parents. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities, including those whom the school has identified as requiring some additional support for learning difficulties. It is guided by a range of suitable schemes of work provided by the school and by the Focus Learning Trust. Exceptional attention is given by the school to ensure that pupils' individual learning needs are met. The school is alert to opportunities to build on pupils' aptitudes and strengths through opportunities that can be provided through the curriculum as a whole. It provides excellent support for pupils to develop skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. All pupils attend the school on a full-time basis. The curriculum benefits from strong links that the school maintains with families and which support pupils' preparation for life.

The primary department has already established a good, broad and balanced curriculum, in full accordance with both the Trust and national requirements. Their personal development is carefully and appropriately addressed. Department planning is detailed and effective and caters properly for the mixed age classes, although the implementation of these plans is not yet consistently apparent in classes and in pupils' writing. Rigorous attention is given to the development of fully secure literacy and numeracy. The provision for the needs of pupils of different abilities through a range of learning styles both in class and through the work of the special needs co-ordinator is excellent, as have been the arrangements for liaising with pupils' previous schools and meeting the challenge of receiving four year groups of pupils, none of whom have studied at Brownberrie before.

In the secondary school the suitably wide range of subjects studied includes English, mathematics, science, history and geography and design and technology. Art is taken by all pupils to the end of Year 9, but is not currently a GCSE examination subject. A large number of pupils learn to play a musical instrument, including the piano, or are members of a school choir. Overall, pupils in the school demonstrate a genuine interest in music. From Year 7 to Year 11, pupils study German and have the opportunity to extend this into the sixth form if they show sufficient aptitude. Particular features of the curriculum include Bible Studies, which reflect the distinctive religious character of the school and is taken by all pupils from Year 7, and Wordex taken to the end of Year 11, which reflects the value placed by the school on the development of office skills. The strong vocational strand of the curriculum is further supported by business studies that is taken as a GCSE subject by all pupils in Years 10 and 11. All pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 take a course in personal, social and health education (PSHE) as well as citizenship. This good provision for pupils' personal development is supported through many aspects of the curriculum throughout the school. Careers education is a very strong thread which permeates the secondary curriculum and a range of opportunities for work experience provided for pupils from Years 11 to 13. Opportunities taken by pupils for work experience are monitored carefully. Pupils take PE and games throughout the school, supported by the school's new games fields and use of a nearby sports hall. As a result of the opportunities provided by the curriculum, when pupils reach the

end of Year 11 they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, their future lives and economic well-being.

Students in Years 12 and 13 have access to a suitably broad range of subjects. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that an appropriate range of options is available to them. Pupils in Year 11 say that they receive good advice on making choices before entering the sixth form. The curriculum in Years 12 and 13 is broadly divided into two aspects, an academic or a vocational pathway. Within this broad divide, the school makes considerable effort to respond flexibly to students' individual abilities and aptitudes. Currently, academic options include mathematics, geography, German, art, accounting, law, business studies, and government. Students in all courses have opportunities for creative work, for example through non-examination courses in design and technology and home economics; those taking the range of the vocational option benefit from an extended work experience on one day a week as part of their full-time education. Pupils say that a good range of trips and visits are undertaken as part of the curriculum. The school is seeking ways of extending the adequate range of extra-curricular activities. A minority of parents and pupils say that they would like to see a wider range.

The school caters exceptionally well for children in need of learning support. It is developing support for those identified as being either gifted or talented. The arrangements for identifying individual pupil need through both teacher identification and judicious testing are comprehensive. Individual education plans are communicated to staff in an imaginative and accessible format which contributes vitally to teachers' outstanding success in adapting learning to individual needs. The provision is guided by well qualified co-ordinators in both primary and secondary parts of the school and very well supported by the informed learning support assistants, operating discretely and sensitively in both primary and secondary classrooms.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The overall quality of teaching and assessment in the school is outstanding. The quality of teaching is outstanding in the secondary part of the school, and the primary department has made a strong start in the short period since it was opened and already demonstrates a good quality of teaching and learning. As a result of the overall high quality of teaching, supported by small classes throughout the school which ensures that all pupils receive individual support, pupils of all ages make good progress relative to their abilities. The progress made by pupils as they move through the school is exemplified by the good results most achieve in public examinations, which were considerably above the national average. Pupils appreciate the efforts of their teachers and say that they are encouraged to do their best. Teaching encourages pupils to work both individually and co-operatively in groups. Lessons are typified throughout the school by the positive relationships between teachers and their pupils and pupils with one another. Pupils' good response to learning opportunities was typified by a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson where pupils began their work quickly, responding to the challenges set by the teacher and working co-operatively with one another.

Teachers in the primary department know their pupils extremely well. They cater extremely effectively for the needs of individual pupils. They make their lessons lively and vary the style of tasks to enable pupils of different ability and learning needs to make good progress. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked excitedly together in

science completing different combinations of circuits in series, comparing their results with their predictions.

Teachers in the secondary school plan and structure their lessons very well. Pupils of all abilities are made fully aware of the purpose of learning and what is to be learned in each lesson. Teachers are specialists in their subjects, and this enables them to draw on a wide range of background information to enrich the learning experience. The quality of questioning by teachers in classes is good and frequently very good. Teachers appreciate the importance of ensuring that questions, as well as the range of work provided, are pitched to meet the range of pupils' abilities in their classes. Questions are often used skilfully to draw out answers from the more quiet or unsure pupil, as well as to challenge the most able. Questioning frequently requires pupils to think independently and to express their own views on topics, which encourages their intellectual development. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson on identifying starch in a leaf, questions challenged pupils to use scientific knowledge learned previously to hypothesise about the outcome of an experiment. The small size of teaching groups ensures that no pupil is left out of discussions and that each has the opportunity to play a full part in lessons.

Lesson planning is of high quality and pays careful attention to the need to ensure differentiated work, including extension work for the most able. The high quality of planning and structuring of learning activities ensures that lessons proceed at a rapid pace and that pupils have little time to waste. The quality of teaching, particularly in the secondary school, is supported by teachers' strong classroom management and communication skills, which cultivates a positive response, interest and excellent behaviour from their pupils; they also understand the importance of listening to pupils. Excellent use is made by teachers of the suitable range of resources in planning and teaching lessons.

The school has established a clear framework for assessment, supported by suitable policies relating to assessment and marking. Strategies to support effective assessment are good throughout the school. The school has gone to considerable lengths to establish the academic history and previous attainment of pupils prior to them joining the school, by seeking out examples of projects and other work they have done at their previous schools. The quality and format of the summative information provided by the school's management to teachers about each child and their specific abilities, aptitudes and learning needs are high. Teachers' assessments and information from tests and examinations are used well to track pupils' progress through the school, and an appropriate data base for monitoring and tracking the progress is being built up. In some subjects in the secondary school, teachers already provide pupils with information that raises their awareness of both levels of achievement and how further improvements can be made. Teachers in the primary department mark pupils work regularly and often give praise, though they tend not to indicate the actual quality or standard of work, so that pupils are not clear about how well they are doing. Marking in the secondary school is regular, and the best examples show good feedback to pupils. Nevertheless, there is some inconsistency in the extent and quality of feedback provided.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 2 - The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Personal development in all its forms is at the heart of the school's ethos and is of exceptionally high quality. It has improved since the previous inspection, when it was good. Pupils in the school are lively, and are interesting, mature and confident young people, who make full and responsible use of the balance of autonomy and the discipline that the staff provide. They are friendly and courteous, with a clear sense of direction for their future lives.

Spiritual development is outstanding. Daily assemblies and Bible Studies develop their understanding of the Christian beliefs and values of the Brethren. Pupils listen thoughtfully to the exposition of biblical proverbs designed to help them balance the worldly and spiritual, and are encouraged to reflect on these throughout the day. In the discussion of the need to be careful not to pursue ambition at the expense of the soul, pupils show a mature awareness of themselves as people. The teachers secure in them high self-esteem through the praise and support they provide. From the work they do across the curriculum, including through literature and history, they derive an understanding of the feelings and motivations of others.

Pupils have a strong moral sense; values are at the heart of everything the school does. They display a clear sense of right and wrong, based on the principles they learn from the Brethren. Pupils of different ages devise their own codes of conduct, which they display in their classrooms and honour in practice. Pupils in general respect the school's rules and are in most cases well behaved in lessons, although within the primary department there are times when some children's natural exuberance is not sufficiently checked. By contrast, however, in playtimes, pupils' energy is tempered by their consideration for one another, so that, for example, seriously competitive soccer can proceed without the need for adult or referee.

Social development is an outstanding feature throughout the school, which constitutes a tightly knit community of pupils, teachers and, increasingly, parents. The school aims to include every individual in its life and work and succeeds handsomely. A notable feature is the extent to which all pupils are able to take responsibility for decisions. Older pupils take responsibility for younger pupils, and contemporaries for each other. The systems of house captains and leaders of various activities develop qualities of leadership, as do the secondary and primary school councils. These are fully run by the pupils, with supervisory support from teachers, and are able to make proposals to the school's managers, often with success. The primary council had decided to carry out an opinion survey before deciding whether to come to the staff with a particular suggestion. Pupils are well informed about the institutions of government through citizenship lessons taught formally throughout the school. As a result, they develop a very good sense of what it means to be a citizen of the United Kingdom. They are well prepared for economic life, both through their PSHE and other subjects. The primary council has been helped by parents to start a 'bank' for the money they raise for charitable purposes. They have a chairman and secretary, and a treasury which they manage themselves.

The school curriculum includes a good range of cultural elements. Music is rapidly developing into a strong feature of the school's life, as the numbers of opportunities for learning instruments and for performing in a variety of ensembles increases. From Bible Studies, PSHE and from a wide range of other subjects, pupils are able to develop a clear understanding of and respect for the range of other cultures and faiths that exist in Britain. Through geography, taken by all pupils, they develop a good understanding of the world and its cultures.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

Throughout the school, provision for the welfare of pupils is outstanding, as is, in general terms, the provision for ensuring the health and safety of all pupils. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthy food and are provided with appropriate opportunities for sport and physical exercise. The school has prepared and implemented effectively a policy for promoting good behaviour. Practice has varied between the secondary and the primary sections of the school in the way matters such as incidents and accidents have been recorded, and the school is now aligning its procedures in this respect. Details of admissions are correctly recorded and are now entered into one whole-school register. Attendance registers are properly kept. The school has clear policies and procedures relating to anti-bullying, health and safety, and risk assessment. It has also ensured that the level of fire safety satisfies requirements. The site manager has maintained thorough records of links with the West Yorkshire fire service. The school has conducted fire practices and is working to ensure that all teachers, whichever day of the week they attend, are involved in this process. An audit form has now been produced to maintain records in this respect. The school has a written First Aid policy, and First Aid training is regular and up-to-date, and notices around the school draw attention to this.

Pupils are properly supervised and trusted by the staff, and this enables them to learn to behave in an appropriate and mature manner. They are entrusted, for example, with a range of responsibilities which involve the welfare of other pupils. This is reflected through the allocation of house duties such as the role of house captains, which include a boy and a girl in each house. The pupils appreciate the challenging role of acting as mentors on the buses, and this is reinforced by the strong and mutually supportive relationships among the pupils and between pupils and staff.

Thorough attention is paid to the needs of all pupils and to their future prospects and opportunities for employment. Pupils have been trained in First Aid, and those on buses have been given training which enables them to attend to those pupils with identified medical needs as appropriate. Pupils are encouraged by teachers to make clear to them any reservations they may have about specific aspects of their schooling, and they know that their observations will be treated with respect. The school provides a mutually supportive and safe environment for the pupils' education. The DDA plan reflects Focus Learning guidance and is specifically relevant to this site. It fully meets requirements, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Responsibilities for safeguarding pupils' welfare are clear, as is the role and operation of the child protection officer. Links with local safeguarding agencies are strong.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 4 - Suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school understands the importance of ensuring the safeguarding of its pupils and has undertaken all the required checks of staff and other adults associated with the school. The school has a register of the checks undertaken.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation of the school fully meet requirements. The school has worked assiduously and diligently on the new premises to ensure that the accommodation meets the needs of pupils and staff. The school is now sited in refurbished and extensively restored accommodation in a Victorian building which has been previously used for educational purposes. The secondary school occupies the first two floors of the main building, and the primary department is housed in a single storey building adjacent. The site is secure, and is surrounded by a large grassed playing field and an orchard. The facilities are used to full effect, and the apple trees in the orchard have become a stimulus for environmental awareness among some of the pupils. Plans are in hand to reinstate the gates at the school's outer entrance, to provide a hard surface area for parking, and to remove the existing razor wire on the art room fire escape. Chemicals are securely stored in the science laboratory, but some adjustments to their storage are required to ensure appropriate ventilation. The school provides wholly suitable facilities for those who are ill, and these are available throughout the day and are furnished with good toilet facilities.

All the accommodation is well maintained, tidy and clean. The site manager is quick to remedy any imperfections, and a leak in the primary school roof was rectified the same afternoon. Classrooms are used to good effect, and the school is adorned with a stimulating range of displays of resources supportive of learning, with thought provoking proverbs and sayings, and with high quality pupils' work, including poetry. Space is well and flexibly used throughout the school, with good areas for assembly. Outside sheltered seating facing the playing fields is much appreciated by pupils. The secondary school currently has no dedicated library space, but that in the primary is used enthusiastically and to good effect by the pupils. Pupils commented positively on access to sport and to games. They appreciate what has already been established, and are looking forward to further improvements planned by the school.

A series of quotations from interviews with pupils reinforce their delight with the new school location: *"It is a better school. There is space to do things and our behaviour has improved as a consequence. We feel safe and secure."*

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The school maintains good communications with parents. All the required information is provided. The school keeps parents informed in a number of ways, for example through the school planner, which is presented by pupils weekly to the form tutor and parents for signing, and which contains information of the pupils' performance during the week. This means of communication is two-way and affords both parents and the school the opportunity to comment.

Reports are sent out twice each year, in spring and summer, and show the progress and attainment of the pupil in each subject. In addition an interim report is sent to parents each half term. The helpful reports to parents are appropriately supported by meetings between staff and teachers.

The prospectus provides all the required information for parents, including the school's ethos, the names of the staff, and the subjects offered, together with guidance about the necessary policies, and where other more detailed information can be obtained. An attractive school magazine is produced each half term by a group of pupils which describes activities that have taken place within and outside the school, supported by coloured photographs, together with topics of current interest and competitions.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 7 - The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The school follows the complaints procedures set out by Focus Learning and meets the requirement in full.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SECTION C: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT, AND MAINTENANCE OF THE ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

This section is not a requirement of the Education Act 2002. The business organisation and management of the school were inspected by the Lay Inspector, who has written this section of the report.

The quality of the organisation and management of the school

Brownberrie Education Trust has seven trustees who fulfil their responsibilities competently, assisted by several others whose work and duties would normally be associated with trustee status. The present site, taken over in January 2010 and developed, with the subsequent addition of the primary department's building, is already well organised. The orderly transition from the former buildings in Leeds to the new premises is a tribute to the hard work and diligent attention to detail of many, but is also a reflection of the well organised state of the Trust.

All responsibilities required of the trust are fulfilled, detailed in the Management Structure Plan showing the function of each trustee and the names of those who help them. It might ease the burden if the trust deed were amended to include a further two trustees, but it is understood this is awaiting further direction from Focus Learning Trust. Although there has been a considerable volume of work requiring immediate attention, the trust has also been considering future developments for the school.

The management of the school shows a high degree of organisation. The Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) team of three comprises the CEO himself, another trustee, and a further member of the Brethren, not at present a trustee, but who assists in a practical way in trust activities. At least one of these attends the school each day, and all are in frequent contact with each other and the school. School trust meetings are held every half term with the colourful Project and Task Report being updated just prior to each meeting and amended in the light of decisions made. Minutes of the trust's meetings are brief as the Project and Task Report is considered to be the more important document giving good information about the progress and present state of each project.

There are also weekly management meetings, alternating between the School Management Team and School Leadership Team, the latter dealing more with teaching issues. These weekly meetings include the head teacher, the senior teacher of the primary department, key staff and trustees, usually the whole CEO team. They provide an opportunity for regular contact with the staff and provide an effective channel of communication.

The input of the new head teacher and her staff has been a major factor in enabling the school to settle quickly into its new environs. A site and support manager, who has been with the school for four years, relieves the trustees and staff of many practical functions. For example, he oversees the safe departure of the five minibuses at the end of the day, and he assists with arrangements for morning assembly. The appointment of a school secretary, who has taken over the office duties, ensures that records are maintained in good order.

Communication between the trustees is excellent, as it that between the trustees and the school. The head teacher conducts briefings with her staff first thing in the

morning and a note of her comments is pinned on the staff room notice board for the benefit of part-time staff. The contribution of parents in helping, particularly in the primary department, is greatly appreciated, as is also the work done by the primary managers. The Bible Studies co-ordinator is planning to work together with the head teacher to monitor the lessons taught with a view to giving guidance on lesson planning to those members of the community who undertake to teach these lessons. This, it is expected, will work beneficially to improve the presentation and support developing strategies for managing learning.

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust. Further copies of the report are available from the Operations Manager of the Focus Learning Trust, Siskin House, Siskin Drive, Coventry, or from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionservice.co.uk