

# William Henry Smith School

Boothroyd Lane, Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 3JW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

The school is a non-maintained special school for boys who may experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. Pupils may also have additional needs, including learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and communication needs.

There are 81 pupils on roll at the school and there is capacity for 36 boys to stay in the residential provision. The school provides education to boys aged five to 16 years old and accommodation for boys up to 19 years old. Older students attend colleges in the local area.

Accommodation is provided in three residential houses in the school's grounds. The school is set in several acres of land and has a range of facilities. These include a quad bike track, an outdoor gym, indoor sports hall, and a farm.

The school provides flexible weekend support, as well as outreach work to pupils and their families during holiday periods.

The head of care has been in post since September 2020. He has suitable qualifications for the role.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

### Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 1 February 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children thoroughly enjoy their residential stays. Many attend the residential provision for several years and it becomes a significant part of their lives. Family members are delighted about the progress that their children make and the support that they receive. Some children are vocal about their wish to be part of the residential provision. One boy said, 'I put my foot down and said I am going to stay in the residential and that is that.' Children and their families understand the value of the residential provision. They are extremely grateful for the opportunities it provides.

Children develop strong relationships with staff who they come to know very well. Staff are exceptionally nurturing towards children. Staff use their detailed knowledge of children to provide individualised care that quickly gets to the heart of children's needs. Children trust staff, because of the responses that they receive. This helps them to make and sustain excellent progress.

Children spend time with staff talking about the issues that matter to them most. Staff are trained to undertake this work. Their conversations with children are meaningful and children begin to understand their potential. With the help of staff, children start to work on achieving what they want. Staff use their skills to support other staff in the school. This enhances the consistent approach that children receive throughout the school.

Staff form excellent connections with parents and carers. Staff spend time understanding the barriers that family members often experience. This enables staff to provide specific support to parents and carers. This has a remarkable impact on some family members. They become more self-assured and confidently practise strategies that they learn. This allows the progress that children make in school to be sustained at home. The outreach service is being developed to reach more children and families because of its success. This aspect of the residential provision is a significant strength of the school.

Children's emotional and developmental needs are very well supported. A team of therapeutic staff provides targeted help to children and advice for staff. This support can be extended to family members. For example, a group for grandparents has reduced their isolation and increased their knowledge about children's needs. Therapeutic staff ensure that training for residential staff is coordinated. This ensures there is a unified approach for staff to work within. Staff value the expert guidance that they receive. They use this knowledge to help children to feel safe and to make progress.

Children's physical health needs are fully met. Staff encourage children to be active. This supports their emotional needs as well as their physical well-being. Staff make

significant efforts to help children to eat healthily. As children get older, they learn to cook their own nutritious meals and take pride in what they create. The school nurse is unrelenting in her desire to ensure that children receive the regular healthcare that they need. For example, she ensures that children have regular dental checks, if family members have been unable to find local dentists with availability. The arrangements for medication are sound and embedded in staff practice. The health outcomes for many children improve, because of the high-quality input they receive.

Children take part in a wide range of activities during residential time. The school has interesting opportunities on site, including a farm and quad bike track. In addition, children take part in exciting trips away from site. Many trips challenge children's own perceptions of their abilities. For example, children go mountain biking and trekking in North Wales. Adventures such as these mean that children build wonderful memories, develop their social skills, and improve their self-esteem.

Staff are alive to the cultural and identity needs of children. Many children do not live with their immediate family. Staff understand the impact of this on children and talk to them about what this means for them. Staff took one child to visit his country of birth, to help him appreciate his heritage. Such initiatives are significant. They help children to value aspects of their identity that would otherwise be lost.

Children receive excellent support to prepare for adulthood. Staff talk to children about their aspirations, including placements at colleges or other learning opportunities. A member of staff has developed links with staff in local colleges. This helps to identify the individual support that children might need. Staff remain in contact with children when they move on, to ensure that they are being helped to settle. Some children continue to stay in the residential provision to receive additional support. The help and advice that children receive means that they all continue their education after leaving school.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

Children feel safe in the residential provision and are safe. The excellent relationships that staff have with children mean that they recognise signs of concern quickly. Reporting mechanisms are straightforward, and staff share concerns appropriately. School safeguarding practitioners are tenacious in following up issues with other agencies. Despite an increase in complex issues during this period, staff consistently ensure that children are safe.

Staff offer direct, practical support to children and families at times of crisis. For example, children attend the residential provision if this is needed due to family breakdown. This is often at short notice. Families experience this intervention as being supportive, because of the quality of relationships that they have with staff. Such a response is effective for children, as they already know the residential provision. This support is flexible and based on the needs of children. As such, it is effective and highly valued by children and families who are in need.

The response to children when there are safeguarding concerns is excellent. For example, if children leave the school grounds, staff immediately search local and other known areas. All protocols are followed, with clear evidence of information-sharing. Safeguarding leaders challenge agencies who do not respond to children's risks linked to their vulnerabilities. Significant weight is given to helping children think about what is troubling them. Staff talk to children about the impact of risks such as being missing, including the potential for exploitation. This helps children to develop skills that they need to make safe decisions. This has particular impact when they are away from school.

Staff use highly individualised plans to support children's behaviour. Plans are informed by the strong relationships that staff have with children. Strategies to reassure children are specific. For example, one child enjoys cuddles, while another prefers to be given space, when each begins to struggle with their emotions. This personalised approach means that children receive the support that they need when they need it.

Children are rarely restrained in the residential provision. However, when children are at risk of hurting themselves or someone else, staff physically intervene. Such interventions are effective and lead to incidents ending quickly. Senior staff talk to children about what happened, to ensure that their views are understood. All incidents are evaluated to learn lessons for the future. Children are confident that staff act in their best interests, because of the strength of their relationships.

Recruitment arrangements continue to be safe. Procedures reflect updated statutory guidance, including undertaking online searches of shortlisted candidates. Senior leaders give a great deal of thought to how new staff are employed. As a result, the right staff are recruited and are performing well.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The school is led by a talented, inspirational principal. Her passion for children is at the forefront of all she does. Her uncompromising approach to putting children at the centre of her thinking motivates leaders and staff to perform at the highest level. This results in a shared commitment to providing the very best opportunities and outcomes for children.

The school continues to develop its offer for children. Leaders explore new initiatives. Staff think about ways in which children's experiences can be enhanced. Existing ways of working are reviewed to ensure that they remain appropriate for children and families. Leaders evaluate the reasons for children's changing needs and respond accordingly. For example, they recognise that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is far-reaching. In response, the offer of outreach support to families has been extended. This forward-thinking and creative attitude keeps the school responsive to the changing needs of children and their families.

Leaders constantly seek the views of children. Changes within the residential houses are made in consultation with children. Children are encouraged to put forward their ideas for activities, including trips and holidays. Great weight is given to children's thoughts about their experiences of the school. Their wishes are granted whenever possible. Children learn that their views count, as they see their ideas come to fruition.

Residential staff are highly valued in the wider school. Teaching and support staff recognise their skills in talking to children and engaging with families. Residential staff lead on projects, such as developing the role of the key worker within school. The extension of the outreach support to families has developed because of the success with residential children. Residential staff recognise that they are valued for their knowledge and skills. They are justifiably proud of the difference that they make.

Staff are very well supported by residential leaders. The head of care and his deputy are highly visible within the residential provision. They model good practice. They are available to staff for ad hoc advice and support, which staff find reassuring. Staff also have regular supervision and appraisal of their practice. Leaders encourage staff to use their knowledge of children to develop creative initiatives that will positively influence children's experiences. Staff appreciate being given the opportunity to be part of children's personal development and growth.

Staff receive the training that they need to perform well. They take part in useful, often bespoke training from the specialist staff in school. This input is timely and has considerable impact on staff knowledge and skills. For example, some staff have been trained to carry out hearing tests with children. This significantly reduces the time that children wait for such tests, which are essential to understanding children's communication needs. When staff need to learn a lot of information in a short space of time, leaders carry out a review of learning styles. This means that the training is effective. As a result, children are being cared for by staff who have the knowledge and skills to do so well.

Staff continue to receive significant support for their overall well-being. They take part in activities at the end of the week that are imaginative and fun. There is a whole-school approach to this. This means that the newest staff at the beginning of their careers take part in activities alongside the most senior leaders. This helps to break down any barriers to understanding each other's roles. An occupational health adviser provides very helpful guidance around a range of relevant topics. Such high-quality support helps staff to feel valued by senior leaders. Staff recognise that this makes them more effective practitioners with children.

There have been several changes in the senior leadership and wider organisation of the school. There is no evidence of any negative impact on children of these changes. Leaders retain their focus on children's needs and the development of the school. As a result, children continue to receive the high-quality care that they have always enjoyed.

The school is extremely well supported by its trustees and the governing body. Representatives of both groups visit the residential provision and talk to children about their experiences. The school is also assisted by an experienced and knowledgeable independent visitor. These visitors make recommendations about improvements for children. This oversight means that leaders receive the challenge and support required to meet the needs of children to the highest of standards.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.



## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC001038

**Principal:** Sue Ackroyd

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Jane Titley, Social Care Inspector (lead)  
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