

The William Henry Smith School and Sixth Form

The William Henry Smith School and Sixth Form, 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 89 pupils on roll at the school and there is capacity for 35 boys to stay in the residential provision. The school provides education for boys aged between five and 19 years and accommodation for boys aged up to 19 years. Older students attend sixth-form provision or other colleges in the local area.

Accommodation is provided in four residential houses in the school's grounds. The school is set in several acres of land and has a range of facilities, including 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.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 November 2024

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: 13 September 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children are provided with exceptional child-centred care from dedicated, caring and nurturing staff. Children are kept busy by the staff during their stays in residence doing things that they love with people that they have trusting relationships with. Staff are committed to the children and go the extra mile for them and their families. For example, staff teach parents new skills so they can support their children's hobbies at home.

Staff go above and beyond by facilitating opportunities for parents to strengthen their bonds with their children. They encourage them to spend quality time together engaging in activities the children thrive from. This practice helps to heal any problems in their relationship and reinforces positive, supportive family connections. Through these efforts, staff contribute significantly to keeping families together.

Interventions are highly individualised and carefully planned to meet the specific needs of the children. This makes children feel valued and keeps them engaged in the session. Direct work is thoughtfully adapted to reflect each child's unique circumstances. For one child, their low confidence meant they struggled to speak. Staff's support helped the child to develop significantly. The child now goes to the shop independently, buys their own items and has handed out information leaflets to the local community. This has increased the child's self-esteem and feeling of self-worth.

Children benefit greatly from the on-site multi-agency team which provides a co-ordinated and holistic approach to support. For example, one child spoke warmly about their drama therapist, describing how much they enjoyed their weekly drama sessions. These therapeutic opportunities enhance the children's emotional and social development.

Some children leaving the school are being prepared for adulthood through work experience. There is an excellent focus on practical, real-world skills, preparing students for independence and future employment opportunities. One child spoke positively about his recent 'job interview'. He applied for a job with the maintenance team and was successful at interview. The child's work with the maintenance team during the week, is helping to increase the child's confidence as well as developing important practical skills.

The outreach work that staff undertake with children and their families plays a crucial role in fostering stronger relationships and enhancing the overall experience for both the children and their families. Additionally, staff help children learn new skills and hobbies during their stay in residence. This is then, seamlessly integrated into their home life. This approach not only benefits the children but also helps parents understand and meet their children's needs more effectively.

Feedback from children's family members emphasises the holistic support provided to their child from the staff, covering both their physical and mental well-being.

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

The provider's approach to safeguarding is thorough. The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable about the risks that children face. The strategies to reduce those risks are known to the wider staff team. Staff undertake annual training on safeguarding matters with refresher sessions during the year. Children said they feel safe in the school.

Children's risk assessments provide staff with clear strategies to reduce risks of harm and help staff keep the children safe. Staff know that some children's needs are extremely complex, and some risk-taking behaviours are displayed by children. The staff respond to these appropriately and children are supported to understand how best to keep themselves safe and how to avoid any associated dangers. Furthermore, the excellent wrap around support that is provided by the staff supports the children's parents to understand any risks and how they can help to keep their children as safe as possible when they are home.

Children rarely go missing from the residence. The intervention and support if children do go missing is exceptional. There are detailed discussions between staff and each child to find out the reason they left the residence, where they were trying to go and what route they took. Maps created of routes the children have taken and the places they went, form part of the child's missing-from-home information. This proactive approach from staff means that children are found without delay.

Any incidents or concerns are always followed up with discussions between children and staff. These sessions are carefully planned to support children to reflect on any issues of concern, without leaving them feeling that they are to blame. This helps children to become more self-aware. Furthermore, it helps the children to take accountability and learn right from wrong.

Some children can recognise risks through the engagement, support and encouragement from staff and the intervention team. As a result, they have learnt how to keep themselves safe when in the community. These skills will support the children to continue to keep safe when they are not supported by adults as they enter adult life. One child said, 'Staff helped me to safely travel on public transport, and now I go to college and back on the bus by myself.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The principal leads by example to a very high standard. She demonstrates to all staff her dedication, commitment and love for the children and the school. She works tirelessly to ensure that the needs of each child are met. Children are fond of the

principal and speak of her in high regard. When children see the principal, they do not hesitate to give her a hug. She goes above and beyond to make sure that the environment is a safe and a happy place to be, where children's needs are prioritised.

The principal is effectively supported by the head of care and a highly capable senior leadership team. Together, this skilled, assertive, and confident management team ensures that the residential provision operates at the highest standard. They consistently strive to improve and enhance the children's experiences.

Staff training is not only provided regularly but is revisited in collaboration with the therapeutic teams, allowing staff to deepen their understanding and apply what they have learnt in practice. This ongoing process ensures that training is fully integrated across the school, resulting in a tangible positive impact on the children's well-being.

Leaders and managers empower staff to develop their own knowledge and skills through research and other developmental activities. For example, a staff member worked with the speech and language therapist to ensure that the intervention around online safety was pitched at a level that the children can understand.

Staff's feedback about working in residence was overwhelmingly positive and that their wellbeing is prioritised by leaders. They feel well-supported by residential leaders, the senior leadership team, and by one another. They all take pride in where they work and the meaningful work they do with the children. Additionally, senior leaders actively support staff well-being through benefits such as private healthcare and access to support from the onsite occupational therapist. This fosters a positive and supportive work environment.

The principal does not just want the best for children at her school, she wants the best for all children. Her expert knowledge is worthy of wider dissemination. She has helped to develop residential special schools nationally which has helped them to also achieve better outcomes for children.

No shortfalls were raised at this inspection.

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

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Sue Ackroyd

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Jo Birtwhistle, Social Care Inspector

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