

# 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 77 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.

This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the school.

### Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

**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:** 15 November 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

Children are very happy in the residential provision. They thoroughly enjoy their stays and speak with great warmth about the activities and the staff who care for them. Children are confident that staff want the best for them. This helps children to make the most of other aspects of the school, including their learning. Most children stay in the residential provision for many years and get to know staff and each other very well.

Children develop respectful, engaging friendships with each other. Staff support these friendships at weekends and during holidays. For example, staff will support children by transporting them to their friends' houses if children's families are unable to do so. Parents and carers are delighted with the progress that their children make. Many refer to this school as being the best thing to have happened to their family.

Children benefit from the wide range of highly skilled therapeutic and specialist staff in the school. Therapists and health professionals talk to residential and other school staff about the most effective strategies to meet children's needs. Initiatives include some that are innovative and all stem from a careful assessment of children's needs. Children make and maintain progress because of the specialist input they receive. Children come to recognise their own successes and develop faith in their own abilities. For some children, the progress they make is remarkable.

Children's physical health is fully promoted. Qualified medical staff arrange for children go to the dentist and attend appointments with a doctor when required. Medical staff are also trained to carry out some specialist procedures, including audiology testing. This means that children receive the necessary interventions to enhance their day-to-day lives and their ability to learn. This is a significant outcome for children, particularly those who have not been able to attend important health checks.

Children make excellent progress with their education. Many children had disrupted learning before coming to this school. Staff use their strong relationships with children to encourage them if they feel anxious about going into lessons. The attendance rate is excellent, and positive behaviour in the classroom supports learning. Children work towards individualised targets, which can include national qualifications. As a result, many children experience educational success for the first time in a long time.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities, which are individualised according to their needs. Activities are led by children, rather than by the availability of resources. Children also have the option to attend one of several holidays, funded by the school. The range of trips is wide, which means that children can choose something that is

right for them. As well as being enjoyable, these trips help children to develop their social skills, build their confidence and make memories.

Staff celebrate the crucial role that parents and carers play in the lives of their children. Staff provide tailored guidance and support to families. For example, staff help some families to enjoy fulfilling activities together at weekends. This helps parents and carers to recognise their own potential. The support provided by staff helps parents and carers to use strategies at home that work well at school. This consistent approach helps children to make sustained progress. This approach to working with families is a significant strength of the school.

Children become increasingly independent throughout their time in the residential provision. Staff encourage children to take more responsibility for themselves. For most, this includes cooking for the group and doing their own washing. Staff help children to become more autonomous in the community, by practising using public transport. This means that children who go to college can travel independently. This increases children's confidence and helps them prepare for adulthood.

Staff help children to successfully manage transitions. When children join the school, move from one house to another, or go on holiday, detailed, targeted planning always takes place. Children have the individual time they need to become familiar with a new experience. Staff anticipate potential difficulties and put in place strategies to reduce children's worries and anxieties.

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

Children are safeguarded across all aspects of the school. Safeguarding staff are diligent and follow up any concerns quickly and effectively. Staff work very closely with safeguarding partners to ensure that children get the response that they need when concerns arise. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They use their knowledge and their positive relationships with children to provide highly effective responses.

Staff talk to children about being safe. Relevant external professionals supplement the work that staff do with children, such as risks around child exploitation. Children trust staff, and this work is largely effective. For example, children do not misuse substances or become involved in criminal activity. Children feel safe in school and know how to keep safe in their local communities.

Children's behaviour is generally very good. They respond well to staff, who they know and trust. Boundaries and expectations are clear and make sense to children. Individualised, detailed behaviour support plans provide essential guidance for staff. For example, plans state which staff might be most helpful to which child. Whenever possible, identified staff support a child, regardless of the staff member's role in the school. This approach is highly effective and helps to reduce the need for physical intervention. Children's progress is remarkable from their starting points.

Physical intervention is rarely seen the residential provision. Staff only hold children when nothing else will keep them safe. Following all such incidents, the school nurse sees children to ensure that they have no injuries. Senior residential staff talk to children and staff about what happened. There is a learning culture in the school, which enables staff to speak openly, without fear of blame. This helps staff to learn new strategies. As a result, the number of these incidents is reducing.

Children rarely go missing during residential time. When this does happen, staff consistently follow well-established plans. This includes following children when they are out of the school, ensuring that they come to no harm. Significant liaison takes place with the police, other professionals and family members. This approach means that children know that staff act to protect them.

Health and safety systems are very detailed and kept under constant review. Residential and maintenance staff are vigilant and swiftly identify any concerns. When concerns are identified, they are resolved quickly. This means that children are not at risk from potential hazards or exposed to unsightly damage.

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

The school is led by an inspirational, forward-thinking and dedicated principal. She inspires all staff, including business and support staff, to provide children with the very best opportunities in and out of the school. Leaders offer training and support to other schools in the local area and beyond. This helps to disseminate the knowledge and skills that have been developed over many years.

Leaders and managers have excellent oversight of the school and the wider special school sector. The principal ensures that the well-being of children is at the forefront of all plans. For example, one of the residential houses now offers a more therapeutic environment to children who require such care. This monitoring of local and wider issues and trends means that the school adapts to the changing needs of children. Care continues to be provided to an exceptionally high standard.

Staff are very well supported by their leaders. Staff receive regular and ad-hoc supervision of their practice. They value being able to share personal issues as well as work-related issues. Staff perform consistently well, with few, if any, disciplinary issues. A focus on staff well-being continues to be an essential aspect of working in the school. Staff appreciate initiatives such as Friday afternoon activities, and support for healthy lifestyles. The approach to staff support contributes to a strong sense of a shared community.

Staff receive excellent training and development opportunities. Training goes beyond core learning. This ensures that staff have the specific knowledge to provide children with individualised, effective care. The head of care encourages staff to do their own specialised learning, which they disseminate to the team. For example, a member of staff shared their learning about how foetal alcohol spectrum disorder can affect

children. This extends the knowledge of the wider staff team and supports staff development.

Turnover of residential staff is extremely low. Many have worked at the school for a long time and include staff who previously worked in teaching support roles. Senior staff are often recruited from the existing staff team. This means that children are growing up in the care of the same trusted adults. Children feel able to visit the school after they have left, because they know that familiar adults will be there. This gives younger children a positive message about the future.

The school welcomes external support and scrutiny. Children know the identity of the independent visitor and listener and how to contact them. The school is very well supported by the governing body. Governors are knowledgeable, which helps them to challenge and support school leaders. Governors routinely visit the residential provision, speak to children and understand their progress. They respond to the helpful reports the independent visitor produces after a visit, and any recommendations are acted on swiftly. This provides assurances that the care provided to children is consistently in their best interests.

## **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

**Telephone number:** 01484 710123

**Email address:** [general@whsschool.org.uk](mailto:general@whsschool.org.uk)

## **Inspectors**

Jane Titley, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Carol Jagger, Social Care Inspector



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