

William Henry Smith School

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 pupils who have social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. They may also have additional needs that relate to specific learning difficulties, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorder. The school provides education to boys aged five to 16 years old and accommodation for boys aged five to 19 years old. The older students attend colleges in the regional area.

Accommodation is provided in five residential houses in the school's grounds. The school is set in several acres of land and has a range of facilities. These include an adventure playground, an all-weather sports enclosure, an indoor sports hall and gymnasium, and a farm.

The school stands out in its provision of flexible weekend support and outreach work to pupils and their families during the holiday periods.

Inspection dates: 2 to 3 March 2020

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: 21 January 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children continuously improve from their starting points. Staff expertly lay the foundations that help children to make progress. Staff identify children's unique, complex and challenging needs. A highly motivated, experienced and coordinated multi-disciplinary team is on site. It offers children a wealth of resources to help them to negotiate any barrier to success.

Staff immerse themselves in the school's model of care, therapy and education. Their approach is an eclectic mix of research-based theories and the school's own ideology. They are ambassadors for excellent practice. Leaders share their expertise widely within the national residential special school arena. They never lose sight of the children in their care.

Children make exceptional progress because staff share their experiences. Staff say to children, 'We can do this together'. This gives children the confidence to learn about their past. Children learn to accept challenge and explore novelty. They begin to identify their feelings and understand their relationships. One child told the inspector, 'I have come out from behind the curtain. I can do things I never dared before. I can take on challenge. This is going to help me have a better job.'

Staff create mutual trust and respect for all. They promote an innovative programme of care. It centres on creating a good quality of life. This helps children learn to live together with their friends and with staff. Children can ask for help and receive praise for their achievements. They see their difficulties alongside their capabilities. This builds emotional and mental health. It develops courage to deal with life's ups and downs.

Children build a vocabulary to describe their past and present experiences. This helps them to talk about their fears and their aspirations. Staff are great listeners. They hear what children have to say. Their response provides children with a safe space to take the next best step, however small.

Children say that staff relationships are of great importance to them. Children experience consistency in relationships as they move through the school years. They have key workers in both education and care. Staff sustain these relationships until children make new ones. One teenager told the inspectors, 'Staff stuck with me through the early days when I just wanted to break everything and hurt everyone. It's because of them I can go to college, and they got me a job I love. They listen to me. They help me to work out what I want for my future.'

The on-site therapy team trains and supports staff. Therapists work directly with children and with their families. This seamless approach supports the quality of education and care provided.

Staff hold regular child-focused meetings. They plan and review detailed and inspirational programmes for each child. This means that children make progress in the areas that are most important to them. They can take on new academic challenges and experiences.

Children can increase their independence. They try new social activities and spend more time with their families. They try the world of work or learn a new skill. Older boys would enjoy learning to be responsible for their bedroom keys. This will add to their understanding of being independent. Whatever the outcome, staff help children to see their successes. Staff also support children to explore how to improve the next time they try.

Staff offer children a wealth of new experiences that they can dip into or that create a life-long passion. The list of activities is ever-growing. It encompasses variety. All activity increases children's social skills and confidence.

A high number of staff support children's evenings. They help children to take part in group or solo activity dependent on their needs. Some children cook for themselves. Others share their views about the food provided and make suggestions for improvements.

Staff find creative ways to support each child. Staff provide a ground-breaking outreach programme that wraps around children and their families. They give children essential support to stay safe and positive during their time at home. Staff model healthy relationships and having fun. They provide space for children and their families to have positive experiences. They offer support to help parents to understand their children's needs. Parents say that this approach has made a real difference. They say it has helped the whole family to think and act differently.

Staff capture and describe children's challenges and triumphs with affection and skill. They provide regular updates on children's progress through extraordinarily detailed reports. All departments measure progress against clear baselines. Parents contribute their views about their child's achievements. Children share their opinions about how well they are doing, and what they want to achieve next.

The comprehensive annual report is a unique blend of academic, social and emotional achievement. It includes all relevant areas of children's education and healthcare plans. It provides a holistic picture of every child. It drives targets for the following year. Children learn to be proud of their achievements. They talk excitedly about their progress. They trust staff to be alongside them as they navigate their pasts and think about their futures. At its heart, the school celebrates the importance of increasingly safe, happy and healthy children.

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

Staff understand the importance of assessing and reviewing children's vulnerabilities. From the outset, they explore children's behaviour and emotions. They use finely

tuned skills to identify any potential past trauma. They are alert to any potential risks. They observe and talk to children. They talk to external professionals. They engage with families or with carers to gain as much knowledge as possible about each child. Professional practice results in sustained improvements to children's lives.

The multi-disciplinary team at the school gathers as much information as it can. Its members piece together children's histories and current situations. Leaders work with external social work professionals to address their concerns about children. They challenge professionals to take prompt action to protect children. They use all information in a comprehensive protection plan. This provides children with the support they need to become safer. Staff work tirelessly to help children to understand the risks they face. Plans are routinely monitored and adjusted. Actions are those that best protect children.

Staff and children know what steps are being taken to improve children's safety and welfare. Staff promote a strong safeguarding culture. This extends to life outside of school. Staff check children's welfare during weekends and school holidays. Children know that staff punctuate their time at home with regular calls and visits. They are confident that they can ask to stay at school at weekends. They can join in organised activities or get extra help. Many choose this option. One child said, 'This is my safety net. When things go wrong at home and I get chucked out, I can call staff. They help me to put things right.' This means that staff protect children's fragile progress as well as their safety.

School offers a unique framework for children's safety, and their mental and emotional health. This is making a real difference to children's long-term outcomes. Children continually learn the skills to recognise when they need help and how to ask for it. Staff respond to meet their needs. This creates a positive cycle of learning and change.

Staff use a variety of research-based therapeutic approaches. They offer expert, warm, parenting approaches to help children to feel more secure. The school has refined its approach to positive behaviour support. Staff have engaged in a comprehensive training programme. This centres around the philosophy and practicalities of the school motto of 'Helping children to be the best they can be'. Staff have embraced a change in attitude towards discipline. They are supporting children to learn from positive regard and natural consequences. This drives positive change as children learn to be responsible for their choices.

Staff use restraint minimally. There has been a significant reduction in physical intervention. Leaders always conduct a comprehensive review of staff actions. This results in an action plan to further reduce the need for such interventions. When necessary, leaders challenge staff practice through transparent disciplinary processes. Designated safeguarding leaders involve external social work professionals when necessary.

Children have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Children rarely go missing from school. However, if children are missing from education, staff promptly escalate

concerns to appropriate professionals. This proactive and creative safeguarding practice continuously enhances children's safety and well-being.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers have the highest ambition for what the boys can achieve. Staff work with high levels of cooperation, flexibility and creativity. They find the best way to identify and address children's needs. Such dynamic leadership drives excellent professional practice. Intuitive and capable staff provide excellent support to boys. It helps them to achieve the immense progress they make.

Parents are fulsome in their praise of the progress their children have made. They recognise that the extra support from the school has made a significant difference to their family life. One relative said, 'I feel extremely lucky that [child] can come here. I feel sorry for all the children who cannot come. Every town should have such a school.' Parents value the opportunities they get to enjoy time with their child. They say that outreach work and regular contact supports them and their child to have positive relationships with the school. This reinforces children's progress. All the important people in a child's life know what they are working towards.

Leaders ensure the highest quality of care plans. Plans set out the steps children can take to continue solid progress. The boys are proud to talk about the journey they are taking and their achievements. Staff keep meticulous and sensitive records. Staff capture the boys' efforts and the positive impact on their lives. Staff share children's progress in annual reports. These are of the highest quality. They tell the story of children's experiences and progress. They capture each child's unique perspective. This promotes a unified understanding of children's needs. It underpins crafted goals and aspirations for the next year's work.

Leaders ensure that children's needs come first. They understand that a healthy and enthusiastic workforce provides the best quality of care. An innovative staff care project demonstrates the leaders' commitment to staff health and well-being. Staff have access to free therapeutic services and free or subsidised healthcare provision.

Staff work in a continuous learning environment. They have many opportunities for professional development. A well-crafted induction programme develops into specialist training opportunities. The school equips staff to provide effective care for children. Leaders encourage staff to be brave and try new or experimental ways of working with the boys. They are naturally passionate about the difference they can make. This extends their experiences and horizons. Parents say that their child has a future that they never thought possible.

External bodies have given awards to the school for the creative and innovative work it achieves. Staff are proud of the positive impact they have had on children's outcomes. The 'Breaking Barriers' award, and individual awards for boys, celebrate the difference the school has made. The school makes the most of every opportunity to enhance children's potential.

Leaders and managers use a wide range of systems to understand how well the school is achieving its aims and purpose. The governing body plays a key role in challenging the school and making improvements. The quality of independent visitor reports has improved since the last inspection. They provide greater clarity about the residential experience, and capture children's views. Senior staff use the reports as one tool in their pursuit of excellence. The multi-disciplinary team works cohesively to reflect on the whole school experience. Department heads hold each other in high regard. They challenge and support each other as they strive for continuous improvement. The principal's strong leadership ensures that staff put in place all improvement plans. The plans are monitored to ensure that they remain effective. This creates a positive loop of reflection and improvement that enhances children's life chances.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Leaders to ensure that staff help children to better understand their food-related health needs and offer encouragement to try a healthier and more varied diet.
- Leaders to consider how they may further extend opportunities for independence by allowing older boys to have responsibility for their room keys.

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

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Inspectors

Denise Jolly: social care inspector (lead)

Helen Humphreys: social care inspector

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