

The William Henry Smith School

Principal's Report 2020/21

Despite a year of restrictions, adaptation, and loss of normality the school has continued to operate with a strong solution and creative focussed approach, developing our thinking and seeking solutions. With challenges, there have been many positive opportunities to change the way we lead and the way we support learning going forward. The school has stayed open, with the exception of going into the summer holidays 2 weeks earlier than diarised, and a very short period of time of critical health and safety risk assessment where our most vulnerable children were prioritised for face to face attendance.

Covid has and continues to be a test of our collective strength and resilience. By 11th June 2020 schools had already faced 41 changes to guidance. We all know too well the volume of reporting, tracking and tracing, the daily reporting on figures to the Department for Education and separately to the Local Authority, the challenges associated with opening, and closing, ensuring conditions for our vulnerable (students and staff, and their families) were exceptional. As were the protective measures, which included enhanced cleaning, the move from 'social' to 'physical' distancing, creating bubbles, the physical changes to our site, our rotas, the exchange with unions, liaison with Local Authorities and Public Health, changes to the timetable and curriculum offer, adjusting to virtual meeting, and the critical support to our families. Changes to vehicle use, delivering food parcels and providing shopping vouchers, testing, the suite of new policies and risk assessment guidance, building outdoor spaces, developing our IT infrastructure, creating alternative dining options, and developing further our well-being offer. And then there were the children, those that felt abandoned, those that felt a sense of mistrust and loss, those with increasing vulnerabilities, those at greater risk.

Despite all these challenges we witnessed a magnificent 'call to action', an understood shared purpose, staff embracing change and challenge, and adapting to new ways of working with resilience levels never witnessed before. A team spirit with a renewed sense of purpose, staff stepping out further beyond their comfort; a 'reset' between teams and a further planned blurring of lines & boundaries, linking teams and departments; a demonstration of increased resilience and an almost battle like mind-set. Our children adapted exceptionally well, and with their families and carers support, they accessed virtual learning, and fun activities suited to individual interests. Cake baking, fitness sessions, assemblies, maths, English and music lessons, Student Voice, Psychotherapy, Occupational Health and Speech & Language Therapy continued. Many students enjoyed physically distanced walks with staff travelling to their home areas, a means of connecting and re-establishing relationships.

Our children, young adults, their parents and carers, and staff have managed challenges exceptionally well.



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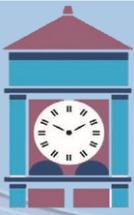
Our on-roll numbers continue to be strong and we have applied to increase to a permanent 80 PAN. In our BEST provision our numbers have risen to 21 with increasing demands from LAs requesting bespoke packages. As a result of this need, we have purchased a property in Elland, providing more learning space. The school are also supporting the Smith Foundation in the development of a Children's Home in nearby Rastrick, and significant work is being undertaken both structurally and procedurally ready for Ofsted approval in the new year. The school has been offered Southowram Library as a community asset project, and we are looking forward to using the resource as a library for all of our students many of whom are avid readers and delivering community benefits for the local residents. There will also be the opportunity for work experience.

We continue our work at local, regional and national level, providing support, learning & development and coaching opportunities. We are proud to have reached out to over 96% of Calderdale schools through our lead work within the LA Specialist Cluster. Our work with national organisations such as NASS and Engage has reached over 100 schools.

We operate with healthy resources and the Trust have this year supported several on site refurbishments, and are planning to do so next year.

Our value for money all-inclusive fee continues to be very competitive. The extent of our costs including Pension, National Insurance, National Minimum Wage increases, and the rise in maintenance and capital costs have posed a financial challenge for the school which we have managed prudently. However, in recognition of the significant pressures Local Authorities are under, fees for 2021/22 were not increased. It is also important to note that, mindful of the pressures LAs were under in relation to spending between 2010 and 2020, the Governors agreed just a 2.43% increase to all fees in the 2020/21 financial year; which was the figure suggested under the national contract formula and only half the suggested amount in the two years prior to that. With this in mind we are suggesting a fee increase for 2022/23 of 1.9%, which again is in line with the national contract. In addition to rising costs, the SLT, Governors and Trustees recognise that there is an increasing need for continual capital investment, not only to further improve and modernise, but also to invest in the latest technology, advances in practice and ways of working, and utilise the site to its fullest given the school's continued growth and expansion. This includes the investment in Boothroyd House, ongoing works to develop this as a 52-week Children's Home, as well as the purchase of Willow (an offsite provision for BEST), planned work to swap Lowry and Therapy, enhance outdoor spaces, and the development of an additional car park with a view to creating more green corridors. The Trust remain fully supportive of these initiatives and are funding the projects from savings and tapping into capital grants.

To support children effectively, it is crucial that staff in education settings are properly supported with their own well-being and given the opportunity to re-establish their own relationships. We are pleased that this forms part of a whole school approach, where staff receive the training, support and opportunities to help them understand their own, and children's well-being so they can confidently support now and into the future. Well-being and focus on quality of life remains a high profile.



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Looking beyond the school, the disruption children and young people have faced to their education during the pandemic has been extensive and will likely have profound consequences. Attainment and educational progress will have been affected, but so too will social and emotional development. The importance of happiness and health through a nurturing environment, the time and space to re-establish their friendships, in recognition of the traumatic nature of this pandemic, and the importance of all children's services being trauma informed is therefore critical. Supporting student well-being is crucial to children and young people's attainment too. All schools should adopt a whole-school approach to well-being, to create an enabling environment, and our work continues here, helping our children recover their confidence, interest and joy in learning...becoming the best they can be.

Sue Ackroyd

Principal

December 2021

BEST-Bespoke Education, Support & Tuition

PAN-Published Admission Number

IT- Information Technology

NASS- National Association of Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools

Engage- National Association-Social, Emotion and Mental Health

Senior Leadership Team

Sue Ackroyd Principal

Rajinder Randhawa Deputy Principal - Admissions, LA Partnerships & BEST

Caroline Booth Deputy Principal - Organisational Quality, Business, Finance & HR

Damien Talbot Deputy Principal - Residential & Pastoral Care, Therapy, Family & Health

Karl Adamski Vice Principal - Teaching & Learning

Steve Morris Vice Principal - Organisation & Workforce Learning & Development

Chair of Trustees/Governors' Report

This past year as we all know has been unique and a challenge across all society affecting all businesses and services. In my role as Trustee and Governor I have seen the SLT and the staff at William Henry embrace the challenge which has been significant not only due to the nature of the pandemic itself but also as a result of the ever-changing guidance and legislation.

Recognising the challenges and reacting to them in an efficient and focused manner has been important and I am pleased to say that everyone has pulled together to ensure this to be the case. We can be very proud that despite everything the school has remained open and provided a safe environment for those pupils able to attend. For those unable to do so there has been home support and contact which is vital to maintain relationships and educational progress. It is inevitable that academic achievement in such times will not be as high as we aspire to deliver and SEN schools have suffered with this during the pandemic.



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Nevertheless, we recognise and deliver much more to our young people's lives and initiatives to support health and well-being has been a great success. I hasten to add this has also been important for staff as well.

In the ever-changing world lessons have been learnt about space, ventilation and organisation that have proved to be of benefit. As a result, where possible, we have created outdoor areas and covered spaces that allow delivery of services away from the traditional classroom. Evidence again that the SLT continue to analyse, review and improve and staff adapt and embrace to the benefit of our pupils.

Due to the ever-changing situation Governors and Trustees have all participated in virtual meetings which has kept everyone informed and well advised and allowed thoughts and best practice to be shared and implemented.

The Trust continue to support and invest in the school. 2022 will see the BEST facility in Elland go live and the building work at Booth Royd House complete and ready for Ofsted Registration. There are also plans to create a bigger and better Therapy building and create a new residential unit with ensuite facilities. These projects take the time of Trustees and I am grateful for their expertise, dedication and support when reviewing these plans and for their support in approving expenditure.

It is worth noting that after 30 years with the school Martin Gibson retired. He was a fantastic asset and whilst we are sorry to see him leave we wish him well for the future and for a long and happy retirement.

There will be continual challenges during the next year but I feel confident that together we will embrace and overcome whatever comes our way and excel in doing so.

Roger J Tilbrook
Chair of Trustees/Governors
December 2021

Governors of the school as of November 2021 are as below:

Roger J Tilbrook	Chair- Trustee /Governors
Andy Fairbairn	Chair- Finance Committee and Trustee
Kate Wilson	Governor (Teaching & Learning)/Chair- School Committee
Graeme Genty	Governor (Safeguarding)
Matthew Crowther	Parent Governor
Lauren Kershaw	Representative Governor (Non-Teaching Staff)
Barrie Campbell	Representative Governor (Teaching)
Sue Ackroyd	Principal/Vice Chair-Governors
Vanessa Talbot	Clerk to Governors