

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 or mental health difficulties. Pupils may also have additional needs, including learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and communication needs. There are 80 pupils on roll at the school and there is capacity for 28 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. The older students attend 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. 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 the holiday periods.

The head of care is new in post, although he is a long-standing member of staff. He has suitable qualifications for the role.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 February 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: 2 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children enjoy exceptionally good, trusting relationships with staff, who they come to know very well. Children understand that staff will help them if they face difficulties. This reassures children. They become more confident, and their sense of self improves. As children's self-esteem develops, they become increasingly supportive of each other. Older children are excellent role models to younger children. Inspectors saw lovely examples of children helping each other, without staff encouragement. The progress that some children make is remarkable, taking account of their starting points.

Children's progress is enhanced through the school's overarching ethos. An innovative approach sees staff using their strong links with children to help them to identify their own goals. Examples of children's aspirations include healthy eating, improved literacy and fitness. Children are helped to achieve these aims through daily practice, encouraged by staff. Children are invested in these activities, because they help to choose which aspects of their lives they wish to develop. As a result, children's development improves significantly.

Children benefit from this whole-school approach being extended to include their families. Staff provide outreach support to family members during weekends and holidays. Staff help parents to maintain routines and expectations that are familiar to children in school. The impact of this work with families is enormous. Children maintain more of the progress they make during the week, rather than beginning anew each Monday. Parents grow in confidence and find renewed enjoyment in their children.

Children's learning is continually reinforced through the 24-hour curriculum. Children follow programmes of learning that span formal education and practical activities. Leaders create imaginative ways to track children's progress. These systems ensure that children can see their own achievements in ways that make sense to them. Children's confidence in their own abilities grows. As a result, children's engagement in their learning is excellent and all go on to attend college at the completion of Year 11.

Children's physical and emotional health is exceptionally well supported through a coordinated, personalised approach. There is an excellent range of therapists in the school. They provide timely help to children and their families, and skilled advice to staff. This means that children get the all-round support they need, when they need it. A school nurse works full time in the school, overseeing the healthcare provided to children. Regular audits of medication take place. Results of audits are not always clearly documented, which reduces their effectiveness. Some out-of-date medication had not been disposed of appropriately. The principal accepted these shortfalls. As a result, new checking and audit systems are now in place.

Children's health and well-being are supported through the provision of healthy meals. Age-appropriate activities encourage children to understand the benefit of a balanced diet. This means that children are more likely to make healthy choices, including when they prepare their own meals. Staff enhance this work by encouraging family members to adopt a similar approach. For example, some families have attended cookery lessons, with very positive feedback. Consequently, good eating habits are being embedded in children's day-to-day lives.

The quality of residential amenities is very good. Resources such as a cinema room and a full-sized snooker table are very popular and well used. Children's bedrooms are personalised and well maintained. As children get older, they take increasing responsibility for keeping their bedrooms clean and tidy. This supports the development of independence skills, which for some children is a wonderful achievement.

The residential provision remained open during the most restrictive periods of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff adapted the activities that children could enjoy, making use of the extensive grounds. For example, staff organised treasure hunts, farm activities and quad bike races. Mealtimes became picnics or barbecues. For those not in school, staff offered support to children and families in their home. This included some online help, including music lessons, fitness advice and virtual check-ins. Other families benefited from home visits, with staff offering food parcels to those in need of this assistance. This contact from staff helped families to cope emotionally and practically with the added pressures that the pandemic brought.

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

The approach to safeguarding children is excellent. Staff respond swiftly to all safeguarding concerns. Action is individualised and based on the significant knowledge that staff have about the children in their care. Communication with other agencies is very good. Staff challenge professionals when the response to a child is not good enough. Staff, including the safeguarding manager, are tenacious. They ensure that the child's lived experience is at the forefront of decision-making. For some children, their lives are improved immeasurably because of the stance that staff take.

Staff follow children's risk assessments and agreed protocols when safeguarding incidents occur. The response from staff is swift and focused on children's immediate safety and well-being. Learning from incidents is forward-looking. Any required changes or training are implemented immediately. This is in children's best interests and means that shortfalls in practice are not repeated.

Staff use detailed positive behaviour management plans effectively. Most children behave well, and incidents of restraint are infrequent within the residential provision. When they do occur, significant support is offered to children during and after the

event. Staff complete comprehensive records of the incident, with a significant emphasis on understanding the impact on the child. All records of physical restraints are reviewed by a member of staff who is qualified in behaviour management practice. This ensures that any required changes are made immediately. As a result, most children's behaviour becomes more settled over time.

Leaders are reviewing the approach to behaviour management throughout the school. Children's behaviour is more unsettled than before the pandemic. Leaders want to understand this and to ensure the best possible response is provided. It is hoped that this will lead to a reduction in the frequency that children are restrained. Although it is too early to evaluate the impact of this initiative, it demonstrates that leaders take action when children need them to.

Recruitment processes are extremely thorough. When there is a lack of clarity about an applicant's background, staff carry out exhaustive investigations, the extent of which are exemplary. This means that new staff are only employed once there is confidence about their suitability to work with children. This helps to keep children safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The school is led by an inspirational principal. She is passionate about helping children to make progress in all areas of their development. The principal leads from the front and is well known to all staff and children. She is supported by a senior leadership team and senior residential staff who share her vision and celebrate the successes of the school. The value to children and their families of the leadership of the school cannot be underestimated.

Leaders are forward-thinking about the school. They consistently evaluate how well the school meets the needs of children. Despite the pandemic, the ethos of the school and the offer to children and their families have continued to develop. This means that children consistently receive optimal levels of care.

Residential leaders are dedicated to their roles. They are aspirational for what children can achieve and they foster this view in the staff team. Leaders are knowledgeable about the detail of what happens in the residential provision. They also have strategic oversight of its development. Leaders recognise that for children to do well, the staff team needs to feel valued and significant efforts are made to ensure this. As a result, children's progress is good, staff perform well and turnover is low.

Staff feel supported by their leaders. For example, the entire staff team takes part in fun activities on Friday afternoons. Staff are encouraged to get to know colleagues who they would otherwise rarely meet. Care and teaching staff have a better understanding of each other's roles, as a result of this initiative. These activities mean that staff begin the weekend positively and are then refreshed for the

following week. Staff feel that their well-being is highly valued by leaders, which encourages them to perform well.

Staff undertake a wide array of training, and all staff are suitably qualified. New learning is provided promptly when a need arises, and training is provided by those with considerable expertise. Experienced staff are encouraged to follow advanced courses of learning. This approach to structured study means that staff are equipped to understand and meet the needs of the children in their care.

Staff receive regular and reflective supervision of their practice. Senior staff promote creative approaches to these sessions, such as supervision walks. This brings a different dynamic to supervision, and raises its profile. Staff appreciate these opportunities, which contribute to the safe and effective care of children.

Staff turnover is low. Many members of the current staff team have worked in the school for several years. They hold a wealth of knowledge about the children, some of whom have also attended the school for a long time. However, new staff are welcomed to the team. Their previous knowledge and experiences are recognised. New staff are encouraged to share their ideas and to positively influence the way that children are cared for. This means that staff continue to develop their understanding of children's experiences. New initiatives are having a positive impact on children.

Leaders respond well to external monitoring. The independent visitor knows the school very well and recognises the positive impact that the residential provision has on children. The independent visitor scrutinises practice and offers suggestions to continue to improve the service. School leaders respond positively to suggestions made. This helps to ensure that the care provided to children is of consistently high quality.

The school benefits from an experienced and highly skilled governing body. Governors hold the principal to account and have high expectations for the children. Governors visit the residential provision. They talk to children to understand their experiences. The development of the residential provision is discussed regularly in governors' meetings, along with any operational issues. As a result, children's well-being is at the forefront of the governing body's oversight.

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

Recommendation

- Leaders should ensure that all medication is safely and securely stored and that proper records are kept of its receipt into school and administration. (Residential special school: national minimum standards 3.8)

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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