

Chief Executive/Principal's Report 2022-2023

I have pleasure in presenting a review of our achievements highlighted by the remarkable success of our children and young adults who have risen to challenge and opportunity, across the three Foundation's domains: the School and Sixth Form, the Specialist College, and Boothroyd House Children's Home. These achievements span areas such as attendance, engagement, qualifications, and accreditation, all which often exceed external quality assurance expectation, and national thresholds. It is important to reflect upon our vital work and our curriculum offer which extends beyond academic and vocational attainment in relation to personal development, wellbeing, and quality of life as equal partners. Our 24-hour curriculum, care and support provides for our learners' broader development, enabling our children and young adults to develop their character, and discover their interests and talents, develop their resilience, confidence and independence and help them know how to keep physically and mentally healthy; equipping them, over time, with the skills and emotional maturity to help them be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society.

In our relentless pursuit of excellence, The Smith Foundation embarked on a journey of extraordinary growth and change during the academic year 2022/2023. Notable statistics over a ten-year period include the foundation's growth in income, which given our charity status and objectives is ploughed calculatedly and relentlessly into providing highly resourced, premium quality and bespoke areas for learning, living, playing, and working. Our staffing has grown in comparable stature, increasing by a colossal 220%, supporting our student body which has expanded by over 110% over our three sites. The Trust's primary mission is estate and fund management providing the supportive environment in which all services thrive. This has served us exceptionally well historically and after a comprehensive review of operations we initiated planned changes in September 2023 to consolidate all services under the unified banner of the Smith Foundation, our charitable company. This action will allow future flexibility for growth whilst protecting the brand and assets of the foundation. Our senior and executive leadership teams have expanded to accommodate the revised structure which will allow a focus on increasing specialisms and breadth of opportunity and even greater oversight and quality assurance. These pivotal shifts ensure that we have an agile, dynamic foundation ready to embrace and navigate the challenges of continuous improvement in an ever-evolving landscape.

On a national scale, we find a similar narrative of growth emerging, particularly concerning boys in Special Schools aged 5-19 with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC), Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, Specific Learning Difficulties (SPLD), and Speech, Language, and Communication (SL&C) complexities, all supported by Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs). Our investment in comprehensive workforce learning and development, broadening and deepening knowledge, upskilling, and reskilling, and using evidenced based meaningful research underscore our commitment to providing the highest quality support to our children and young adults, and a dedication to embracing professional growth through CPD, clinical supervision and coaching. As an organisation, we are committed to trauma-sensitive practice and a recognition of neurodiversity (celebrating our differences); we are on a journey to seeking to further understand and respond to the impact on lives. Our teams continue to engage in training and supported reflective discussion that focuses on trauma and attachment responsiveness, with safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment at the core of our work and with an emphasis on physical, psychological, and emotional safety firmly embedded in our culture of positive behaviour support.

While observing data related to referrals, admissions, and the evolving educational landscape, may appear daunting to some, at the Smith Foundation we view this information as a catalyst for forging

new opportunities to adapt, refine and grow, helping us stay ahead of changes. This year we have seen the publishing of the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan in March and the publication of the "Strong Schools with Great Teachers for Your Child" White Paper in the prior year. We have implemented numerous material changes within our foundation, providing us with the capacity to meet the needs of more children and young adults with diversifying needs and complex challenges, and support and help our families navigate the challenges of access to essential and often crucial intervention and resources. We have adapted to shifts in age demographics and broadened the scope of our services to include a Sixth Form, Specialist College and 52-Week provision. We know this has had a significant positive impact upon our families and external supporting local authority professionals who have aired their frustrations at finding a post 16 educational establishment that can meet their child's needs and aspirations.

We have enhanced our external services, to increase our outward focusing activity, not only being a participant in the world of specialist education, health, care, and therapy but in helping shape the future of the evolving educational landscape on a national level. We have continued to create outstanding learning and development initiatives to support our colleagues in mainstream and other specialist provision, reaching more than 100 schools locally, and other education, and care establishments this past year. We have embraced changes, growth, and the expanding spectrum of services we offer, all while remaining dedicated to our core mission of empowering every student to *'become the best they can be.'*

We are incredibly proud of our younger students who are tackling their learning with increased confidence and resilience and at the opposite end of the trajectory, where our older students are getting ready to make applications to university, having achieved significant success at college, and others who are more than ready for the world of work, a remarkable achievement. One young man has begun his journey into higher education studying BSc (Hons) Game Design at Leeds Beckett University.

Notably, student attendance is an impressive 97.6%; persistent absence (i.e. less than 90%) is exceptionally low representing less than 10%, compared to a national average of 38.7% in special schools.

The Summer 2023 exam preparation and results were also a resounding success in the School and Sixth Form, marked by some outstanding individual performances and a noteworthy increase in AQA unit awards across all our year groups, and OCR's. We proudly re-introduced (following our annual review of effectiveness) our bespoke WHSS Curriculum, designed to provide our students with a holistic and enriched learning experience that aligns with their unique needs and aspirations. Our medium-term planning underwent a transformation, resulting in a more efficient and effective approach to curriculum delivery. We also expanded our curriculum to include City & Guilds Hospitality and Catering, and Construction, providing our students with valuable vocational skills and opportunities for personal growth. Our focus on Careers Education, Information and Guidance underwent transformational change with increased activity designed to help prepare our students for the workplace by providing a clear understanding of the world of work including the routes to jobs and careers that they might find engaging and rewarding.

We further instilled a culture of reading through the introduction of school wide 'Drop Everything and Read' (DEAR) and VIPERS (Vocabulary, Inference, Prediction, Explanation, Retrieval, and Summarisation) activities. Weekly literacy and oracy meetings, subject leads meetings with our Speech and Language Specialists, deep dives, School Improvement Partner (SIP) visits and further rollout of Talk Boost, all ensured continuous collaboration and improvement, and consequently a strengthening of our literacy support and impact across all curriculum areas. PSHE and RSHE being central to providing lifelong learning about physical, moral, and emotional development continues to be being a core focus. Music was also integrated into our curriculum for all students through the Charanga program and supplemented by drumming and percussion lessons, and Physical Development and Healthy Lifestyles (PD&HL) took a significant leap forward with the implementation of the 'Get Set 4 PE' program.

Our previously known 'BEST' provision (Bespoke, Education, Support, and Tuition) has this year attained recognition as a UK Registered Learning Provider and has been re-structured and renamed

as The William Henry Smith Specialist College. While our Sixth Form continues to offer placements for students from the school, the College is accepting non-residential placements for students aged 16-25, structured within a maximum 3-year programme of study. Just before the close of the academic year, the college also acquired additional space in Fordsall House, which will allow us to expand our provision further. It is very pleasing to note that in its first year, learners in the college achieved some impressive exam results in Maths, English, Science, ICT and Life and Living Skills; various BTEC qualifications will be introduced this year, alongside more volunteer and work placement opportunities. We are preparing for both ESFA and Ofsted monitoring and inspection to gain SPI (Specialist College) status.

Our commitment to listening to our children encapsulates our appreciation of the value that their lived experience holds and the sense of feeling safe, seen, and heard on secure attachment. We know and respect that such attentiveness provides unconditional acceptance and a source of information that can help practitioners and leaders inform their decisions and contribute to how we practice and implement strategies through our relational approach. Such opportunities are embedded through Student Voice and house meetings, quality of life questionnaires and contribution to recruitment and developments on site, and importantly through observation and assessment.

Our students have participated in several curriculum and community events and trips to support their timetabled lessons and topics, designed to scaffold learning, and enhance the social and emotional aspects of their development. These have included: Lego club, Safer internet, Williams Wanderers, Magna, York Dungeons, Cannon Hall, Chester zoo, Whitby, Foods from around the world, Origami, Bike maintenance, Eid, NSPCC, Climbing, Makaton, Kayaking, School jobs and work experience, Volunteering, Animation, Bike and road safety, Football, Drumming/percussion and guitar, Sensory World, Sunnyvale, Impact Team – cycling 100 miles in Scotland, Challenge Cup final, Huddersfield Town, Footgolf, Football skills, Day and night fishing, Media club, Jubilee, Personal training and fitness, Falconry day and a visit from Loci the Raven. We have also had the opportunity to participate in sports fixtures with other schools and were lucky enough to represent the school at St George's Park, England's football training ground. Two of our college students were young person representatives supporting the recruitment of the Assistant Director within Calderdale, and we have continued our charitable work with Ward Court, the Salvation Army, St Matthews, and St Augustine's.

This year, we have enjoyed a wide variety of term time holiday breaks to many destinations such as: Wharfedale Lodge-Skipton, Butlins-Skegness, PGL Ford Castle-Northumberland, Flamingo Land, Greece, Holland, Spain and Gibraltar, and school based daily excursions. For the 2nd year running, we have taken part in sailing in the magnificent waters of the Southwest, working alongside crew members on traditional sailing vessels, learning to sail, navigate, passage plan, develop social skills, enjoying a residential voyages experience, and sharing responsibility for all aspects of life on board, from helming and navigation to cooking, keeping the boat clean and tidy, getting the sails up and rowing ashore.

In a testament to our commitment to therapeutic support, this year saw the creation of The Woodrow Therapy Centre, housed in the former residential house, Lowry. This state-of-the-art facility, meticulously designed by our specialist psychotherapists, stands as evidence of our dedication to providing the best possible space and resources for our students. Burrow was transformed from therapy into a residential house, providing a smaller and more nurturing home environment for some of our children, aligning perfectly with our focus on therapeutic 38-week residential provision. We made the decision to close Mozart House, establishing Corbett, dedicated to the tenth learning group specialising in Communication and Interaction and Sensory Processing and opened New Beginnings in the building previously known as Sycamore. This nurturing, needs-led space provides students with the individualised support and structure they require to ensure a smooth transition into school.

Our therapists continue to sensitively provide us with guidance around transition and have played a significant part in the set-up of new provision, assessment and induction of new students and families, and supporting a trauma-responsive approach, specifically in our residential houses. Our Grandparents group continues to be an enormous success scaffolded by the Family Team and

Psychotherapy, providing a welcome and appreciated mechanism for support. Skills-based training designed to empower knowledge and application in practice and within roles has been highly successful, as have space and opportunities engineered for curiosity and reflection.

Throughout the year, the Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) teams have engaged in a multitude of collaborative initiatives, further enriching the support provided to our students. These partnerships have not only enhanced our students' well-being but have also facilitated a more comprehensive approach to their holistic development, including improving their ability to access to the curriculum, daily activity and routines, and playing a strong and integrated role through the super-power of Language, supporting reading, writing and comprehension; a fundamental ability associated with progress in all other domains of development. We have seen such collaboration as we continue our focus across our living and learning spaces, creating enabling and friendly environments and a more supportive atmosphere for our students, and addressing the vital connection between sensory experiences and emotional well-being.

The Nurses team have had a remarkably busy year with health promotion being high on the agenda for all students and staff. Staff well-being, monitoring and signposting have played a key part in supporting the foundation's focus on work-life brilliance- fulfilment and ease in all parts of life-health, work, relationships and home, and staff attendance is a respectful 96%. Staff continue to enjoy quality of life activities on a Friday afternoon, an opportunity to reflect, relax, and get active.

This year there has been a greater focus on collaboration with NHS professionals to help improve the quality of service and accessibility for our young people, including work with local NHS services such as CAMHS, health departments, A&E, Learning Disability nursing teams, dental and opticians, GP's and paediatricians, and local immunization teams. Improving sleep hygiene and the importance of a good routine, weekly visits to college, and work on the Healthy School's Award have been prominent additions this year.

Our work in residential care has been incredibly positive, and more young people across the school have been able to receive the expertise. There has been greater access to community-based clubs for evening activities, fostering a sense of social engagement, friendship, and skill development, and we have been able to tailor experiences to meet the needs and interests of individuals. A greater focus on matching activity (discrete learning opportunity) to formal accreditation has increased the number of qualifications through AQAs and OCRs, and the development of *Learning Outside the Classroom* was extended into residential care with evening visits to Sunnyvale (fishery and outdoor activity centre). There has been increased activity in relation to preparation for adulthood with our older students developing their independence, cooking, washing, and ironing, travelling by bus and train and supported visits to colleges and universities. Individual transition planning, meticulously crafted, ensured successful movement and placement in new houses as we undertook refurbishment and re-designation of purpose. Trauma-sensitive practice, supported by training and supervision, continues to be a significant drive, and the number of staff attaining national vocational qualifications and those studying at an elevated level are increasing.

Boothroyd House has marked an exciting milestone in our journey, as we welcomed our first two young residents during the summer 2023 school holidays. The successful Ofsted registration inspection in June set the stage for this transformative addition, reaffirming our commitment to offering 52-week specialist therapeutic residential care alongside our existing 38-week provision. The boys and staff are settling in well and we have received some very positive comments from Social Workers who have remarked on how well creative and tailored ways of working are exceeding expectations. The Home is busy preparing for its first inspection.

Central Services provide a backbone for the foundation's ability to respond in a rapidly changing landscape with a dedication to supporting its mission, implementing transformative changes, and ensuring operational efficiency across three sites. From the procurement of essential supplies, resource allocation, budgeting, funding and financial management, recruitment, and staffing,

facilitating significant alterations and maintenance, administration, laundry, kitchen and cleaning operations, day to day IT, and corporate compliance, the team ensures a smooth and productive work and living environment, acts with due diligence, specification, policy, standard and law.

A mantra of *always learning* and seeking ways to improve ensures we are always on the move, thinking creatively and without exception always with our children central to everything we do. Our own internal robust quality assurance systems, alongside external reviews of effectiveness have included several different local authority monitoring visits, speciality and exam centre approval, and Health and Safety, Human Resources and Safeguarding audits. Coupled with unannounced visits from an independent care standards consultant, Independent Visitor and Responsible individual visits and reports, and a behaviour expert, we have been successful in attaining a 5 stars outstanding commendation for Health and Safety, the Makaton Silver Award, and the Quality in Careers Standard Award.

An aligned inspection by Ofsted was undertaken of both education and residential care simultaneously and conducted over two days in October 2023 by four inspectors. On this occasion, the inspection also included our Sixth Form, which had recently been approved by the Department for Education in September, a week before inspection. Ofsted concluded that the School and Sixth Form and Residential Care were outstanding across all eight areas. This marks the 19th consecutive 'Outstanding' judgment in residential care.

Inspectors focused on various key areas, including the quality of education, personal development, behaviour and attitudes, experiences and progress of children and young people, how well children and young people are helped and protected, and the effectiveness of leaders and managers. The inspectors' findings were resoundingly positive and highlighted the school's unwavering commitment to students' well-being and personal and academic development. In the area of the quality of education, the inspector commended staff for their excellent subject knowledge and their profound understanding of how pupils with complex needs learn. The vast curriculum offered by the school was praised for its breadth, depth, and exceptional balance, which *heavily emphasises skills to meet the diverse needs of all pupils*. This approach, Ofsted stated, *results in substantial progress in personal and academic development. Moreover, it ensures that students are exceptionally well-prepared for life beyond school*. Residential Care was found to be consistently outstanding, *with the school's actions contributing to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people*. The school's safeguarding practitioners were acknowledged for *their tenacity in addressing issues with other agencies, creating an environment in which children feel safe*. Leaders were recognised for their *forward-thinking approach, exploring new initiatives, and reviewing existing practices to ensure they remain appropriate for children and families-Leaders consistently evaluate the reasons for children's changing needs and respond accordingly, maintaining a commitment to enhancing students' experiences*. The inspectors concluded-*we were incredibly moved by the unwavering support from all staff across the community. We feel honoured and privileged to have experienced life in the school over the two days*.

I am sure that we will agree, 2023 has been nothing short of extraordinary for the Smith Foundation. Looking ahead, we see a future filled with promise, challenges, and areas for potential growth, including the registration of our college and navigating the ESFA and Ofsted monitoring and registration processes. A focal point in the coming year will be the enhancement of the foundation's websites, marketing, and branding, refining further our statement of purpose and curriculum and care offer, and the development of a comprehensive suite of policies which reflects our changing needs and the wider special school sector.

Our work is successful because of the wealth and breadth of specialist staff who work tirelessly, a culture of everything is possible and of continual learning, and leadership and governance which supports and prioritises outstanding care and education standards, supported by health and therapy, and scaffolded by Central Services.

We give thanks to our staff who work so hard every day, to our Governors and Trustees who give up their time to proactively champion our service and its continual improvement, and to our families who provide much needed support.

We are indeed a ‘Village’, a term and concept introduced to us by a visiting behaviour expert. The African proverb suggests “it takes a Village to raise a child”, emphasising that a child’s upbringing is a communal effort involving many different people and groups, from parents and carers to staff in schools, to neighbours and grandparents. The whole idea emphasises the belief that the collective involvement of a community is essential in achieving goals, a mantra leaders hold strong- a culture of bravery, curiosity, of always learning and everything is possible.



Both full Ofsted inspection reports can be viewed @ www.thesmithfoundation.org.uk

Sue Ackroyd
Chief Executive & Executive Principal

Executive Leadership Team	
Sue Ackroyd	Chief Executive Officer/Executive Principal
Caroline Booth	Chief Operating Officer
Senior Leadership Team	
Karl Adamski	Head of School
Damien Talbot	Deputy Principal (Residential & Pastoral Care & Designated Safeguarding Lead)
Leanne Clarke	Vice Principal (Further Education)
Tom Gilbody	Vice Principal (Workforce Learning & Development)
Georgina Poole	Vice Principal (Policy & Practice)
Governors	
Roger Tilbrook	Chair
Heather Gibson	Vice Chair (Safeguarding Governor)
Jeremy Conway	Vice Chair (Careers Governor)
Sue Ackroyd	CEO/Executive Principal
Kate Wilson	(Teaching & Learning Governor) & Chair of Education Committee
Rezina Kelly	(Mental Health Governor)
Megan Meredith	
Matthew Crowther	Parent Governor
Lauren Kershaw	Representative Governor (Non-Teaching Staff)
Barrie Campbell	Representative Governor (Teaching)
Vanessa Talbot	Clerk to Governors/Secretary to the Trust

Trustees	
Roger Tilbrook	Chair
Brendan Heneghan	Vice Chair
Andy Fairbairn	Treasurer
Michelle Cuffe	
David Duncan	
Grant McIntosh	

Key
A&E -Accident and Emergency (normally within your local hospital)
AQA -Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (examination board)
Central Services -Admin, Finance, HR, Kitchen, Laundry, Cleaners & Premises who work across the foundation
CAMHS -Child & Adult Mental Health Service
CPD -Continuing Professional Development
ESFA -Education and Skills Funding Agency
GP -General Practitioner (usually your family doctor)
NHS -National Health Service
Ofsted -Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OCR -Oxford, Cambridge, and RSA Examinations (examination board)
PSHE -Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education
RSHE -Relationships, Sex and Health Education
SEND -Special Education Needs and Disability
SPI - Special Post-16 Institution
UK -United Kingdom
WHSS -William Henry Smith School