

# LIVING NORTH

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## WHO Cares?

Academic results are often the measure of a school's success, but it's more often their experiences outside the classroom that have the biggest impact on our children. We spoke to three of the leading schools to find out what pastoral care means for Yorkshire's youngsters

Whether boarding or non-residential, school often becomes a home-from-home for our children and the way they are supported through this impressionable stage in their development will shape them for years to come. Mental health has now firmly entered the national dialogue and, with approaches to the nurturing of health and wellbeing in our nation's schools changing all the time, we decided to find out what pastoral care really means to three of Yorkshire's finest schools.

### FLEXIBILITY

Aysgarth School, an independent day and boarding preparatory school in Bedale, recognises that, for pastoral care to be most effective, it must be delivered across a range of mediums from both internal and external sources.

'Our view here is that, if a child is happy, having fun and feels safe, then the rest of the learning just happens. So the pastoral care is very much about developing that relationship with a child so that they feel that they've got somebody they can trust while they're here. If they feel safe, then that makes them feel like they can be different – they can join the choir, for example, and not feel like they're going to be teased. They can be who they want to be. It's allowing them to feel that who they are is worthwhile.

'I would say that we're very old fashioned but also very modern, and I think that's the key. We're old fashioned in the sense that it's about getting more adults looking after less children; as a member of staff, if I've got less pupils to pastorally look after, I can do a better job. But we're modern in that we recognise that there are new and modern ways – not to replace you – but to help you identify those pupils that need that little bit of extra pastoral care.

We work with Teenagers Translated [a psychologist-led company] who come into school three times a year with every year group and talk to the pupils about mental health. A big thing for us, being a boys' school, is getting boys to share their emotions. We also use a Social Tracking Device, called AS STEER, which is a platform that is used to help the school check which pupils are able to 'steer' themselves, like a car driving, when different situations occur in life: are they able to steer their car in the right direction or do they not have the ability to do that. This is a set of questions which are produced by scientists, and helps us work out which pupils need a little bit of help to develop their ability to go through life making the right choices.

'But what's the most important thing? Time. Spending time with pupils. We don't lose that.'

Paul Barlow, Deputy Headmaster & Housemaster