

# Dawn House Residential School

Dawn House School, Helmsley Road, Rainworth, MANSFIELD, Nottinghamshire  
NG21 0DQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Dawn House School is a non-maintained, co-educational residential special school, one of two run by the national charity 'I CAN'. There are 70 students on roll, whose ages range from seven to 19. All students have difficulties with speech, language and communication. Some have Asperger syndrome. There are 12 students who reside at the school during the week. The residential accommodation comprises three units located on the school site. The school is situated in the village of Rainworth, Nottinghamshire. The last inspection of the residential provision was in January 2017.

**Inspection dates:** 5 to 7 December 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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:** 17 January 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Leadership and management arrangements are exceptional. The accomplished and tenacious leadership team has ensured sustained improvement.
- Pupils make excellent progress in all areas of their development. Innovative practice in relation to education and well-being has a significant impact on progress.
- Planning for residential care is meticulous. Plans are tailored to ensure that pupils reach their full potential.
- Residential staff have extensive knowledge, skills and experience. They nurture and care for pupils in way that enables them to thrive.
- The multi-disciplinary team provides a level of expertise that promotes progress and development.
- Partnership work with families is excellent. Parents are unanimous in their praise for the school.
- Safeguarding pupils is of paramount importance for this school. There have been no safeguarding incidents, physical interventions or incidents of pupils missing from the home. This is testament to the vigilance and care of the staff team.

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

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

All national minimum standards are met and there are no recommendations for improvement identified as a result of this inspection.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

This residential provision has a profound and enduring impact on pupils and their families. One parent said: 'They are like an extended family to us all.'

Excellent pre-admission planning underpins the success of new residential placements. The school has a multi-disciplinary team that tailors care plans to meet individual needs. Staff from education, speech and language, occupational therapy, well-being and residential care contribute to care planning. Excellent planning supports pupils to make early, accelerated progress. Monitoring processes are effective and ensure that the progress of pupils is regularly assessed. Annual reviews of pupils' progress are person-centred. This enables pupils to be involved in, and central to, their care planning. Throughout their time at the provision, the progress of pupils is exceptional. Pupils' health, education, emotional, social, behavioural and psychological well-being improves from their starting points. This improvement is sustained over time.

Staff forge highly positive relationships with parents and carers. Communication is steadfast and reliable. Families told the inspector: 'They are interested in my son and in us as a family' and 'They are always there to listen.' Parents provide very passionate testimony about the impact of residential care on the progress of their children. One parent said: 'It is really hard as a parent to send your child away, but this school has provided an environment where we know he is flourishing.' Parents are reassured that all of their children's welfare needs are met.

The school has a very strong focus on emotional well-being. They have a highly skilled 'well-being team'. The team identifies pupils who require extra support or interventions to prevent escalating concerns. The team provides a dedicated service to support pupils with their emotional and psychological health. The team rigorously tracks behaviours. This means that progress is measured. The need for additional resources is identified early, and this includes timely referrals to specialist child and adolescent mental health services.

Educational attendance and attainment significantly improve upon admission to this school. All pupils enjoy a school environment which values them as individuals. This means that they engage with the curriculum. One parent said: 'Educational progress is excellent in all aspects.' In addition to the main school, there is specialist educational provision. 'Chimes' is a newly developed resource. Its purpose is to work with pupils who have experienced a number of barriers to education. Pupils access a nurturing environment with individual teaching programmes. Some pupils progress to have a planned phased reintroduction to the main school. This means that pupils who have not previously engaged with education or have difficulties in a classroom setting now access education. This resource nurtures pupils and supports them in building self-esteem.

Residential pupils take part in a wide range of stimulating activities. The residential care

staff support pupils to take part in community projects, sporting and recreational activities, trips and social occasions. Pupils have participated in a Shakespeare production at a regional theatre. They have recently enjoyed a trip to see the Blackpool illuminations. At the time of the inspection, they were practising hard for the forthcoming pantomime. Pupils say that they enjoy excellent experiences while in residence. They develop new interests, make new friends and expand their horizons. This means that their day-to-day experiences are enjoyable and meaningful.

A core activity of the school is to prepare pupils for independence. All residential pupils participate in a development programme leading to accredited awards. Pupils develop practical skills in a range of practical tasks. This means that they are equipped with life skills essential to independent living. Parents enthusiastically commend the success of this life skills programme. One parent said: 'Progress in just 12 months has been phenomenal – wow!' Another parent said: 'He has not been resident for long, but at his recent birthday party family noticed that he is now more independent.'

The views of pupils are valued and are central to the operation of the school. Pupils have recently nominated their own governors from the residential and school provision. At the time of the inspection, the newly appointed governors were preparing to represent the views of residential pupils at the governors' meeting. This means that their views and requests are considered in a democratic manner. This supports active participation and citizenship. On a day-to-day basis, pupils are consulted about their wishes and feelings. They have an independent listener who visits them, as well as quality assurance visits from independent professionals.

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

Safeguarding practice continues to be robust. There have been no safeguarding incidents since the last inspection. Risks posed to pupils are well understood. Clear plans are put in place, with strategies to minimise potential risk. Safeguarding practice is assessed through rigorous internal monitoring, and is assessed by specialist external consultants. This ensures that there are high safeguarding standards.

The management team has several designated safeguarding leads. They have the key responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns. They have up-to-date training and provide 24-hour safeguarding support for staff and pupils. Safeguarding knowledge is kept up to date and includes skill in managing issues such as radicalisation, sexual exploitation and internet safety. Designated safeguarding leads have effective links with designated officers and other important safeguarding agencies. They confirm that there have been no referrals from the school.

Strong governance ensures that safeguarding practice is monitored, reviewed and updated. All governors undertake a range of safeguarding training. The designated safeguarding governor reviews safeguarding incidents and outcomes. This analysis ensures that trends and patterns of behaviour are identified and investigated.

All staff have regular safeguarding training. This means that they have the knowledge to

respond appropriately to pupils who go missing, are at risk of harm, exploitation, neglect, abuse, self-harm, bullying or potential radicalisation. Residential staff monitor the pupils' welfare and have excellent knowledge about individual pupils. This means that they are ideally positioned to identify any changes in behaviour which could indicate potential concerns.

Behaviour management is exceptional. Pupils enjoy a largely harmonious residential experience. Pupils report that there are occasional disagreements, but they say that staff help them to resolve issues. They report that there is no bullying and say that they feel very safe. There have been no physical interventions. This reflects a very settled residential cohort.

The school has employed a new premises manager. He has excellent credentials in health and safety and the management of school premises. The health and safety arrangements benefit from meticulous scrutiny. A thorough audit of health and safety arrangements ensures that fire safety and health and safety are fully compliant with the relevant regulations. The premises manager keeps excellent records and produces clear reports. All health and safety policies are ratified and signed off by the senior leadership team. This ensures that leaders have good oversight of the safety arrangements for the school.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The new senior leadership team, established in April 2017, has a clear vision and a defined sense of purpose. Senior leaders are inspirational and lead by example. The new acting principal is a highly respected and accomplished professional. She leads a very motivated and committed team. She is aspirational for the life chances of all pupils. Excellent team morale and a sense of shared ownership propels improvement across the provision. The external quality assurance visitor said: 'This drive and energy from the management team is having a very positive impact on progress.'

There has been an excellent response to the recommendations made at the last inspection. The head of care has been exceptionally well supported to fulfil his role. This is testament to the commitment of the senior leadership team. Improved supervision, appraisal and induction arrangements provide consistency and oversight of staff competence. Care plans reflect an up-to-date picture of each pupil. These improvements demonstrate the capacity to implement change and improvement robustly.

A central ethos of this provision is the daily promotion of tolerance, equality and diversity. The statement of principles and practice states: 'We aim to develop in all our pupils a spirit of understanding, co-operation and respect for all members of the community.' Pupils who attend this provision have a diverse range of needs, which means that they do not always thrive in mainstream school provision. Inspectors observed that pupils in the residential provision are actively encouraged to respect one another and to accept difference.

Leaders and managers have an implicit understanding of the holistic needs of the pupils. This is because they have extensive knowledge, experience and skills in working with pupils in this setting. They know each pupil personally. They have a commitment to make

sure each pupil reaches their individual potential. Parents are unanimous in confirming this. Leaders and managers provide clear evidence of the progress and plans for each pupil.

Meticulous internal and external quality assurance provides detailed analysis of the care provision. This means that leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Firm plans are in place to ensure that decisive and effective action is taken to drive continual improvement.

The governing body ensures that there is a high degree of independent scrutiny. The chair of governors is also the safeguarding governor. This provides consistency in liaison with the designated officers and the chief executive officer. Since the last inspection, a governor with responsibility for residential care has been appointed. This appointment is in addition to the student governor. Parent governors contribute to the governance of the school. One parent governor said: 'Listening to pupils is a key priority for the governors.' The composition of the governing body means that residential provision is meaningfully represented at all levels.

The operation of the residential provision is consistent with the aims set out in the statement of boarding principles. Additionally, revised policies and procedures demonstrate compliance with current legislation and guidance.

All national minimum standards are met and there are no recommendations for improvement identified as a result of this inspection.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** SC008761

**Acting principal in charge:** Jenny McConnell

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Amanda Ellis, social care inspector (lead)  
Cathey Moriarty, social care inspector



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