

# 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. It is one of two schools run by the national charity 'I CAN'. There are currently 74 children on roll, who range in age from seven to 18 years. All children have difficulties with speech, language and communication. The school can accommodate up to nine children who reside at school during the week in term-time. The residential accommodation currently used is located on the school site. The school is situated in the village of Rainworth, Nottinghamshire. The last inspection of the residential provision was in October 2019.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

### Inspection dates: 29 June to 1 July 2021

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account**      **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected      good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers      good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 1 October 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children in residence are happy and their experiences are very good. One parent reported: 'They are absolutely amazing, and my son is happy there.' The school sets out to help children with their communication and this work is very successful. One member of staff told the inspector about a child's communication, saying: 'They [Name of child] are coming on in leaps and bounds.'

Children have a very strong voice; they know how to air their views and concerns. The care is very bespoke, and each child is seen as an individual. Difference is celebrated and the staff speak warmly about the children.

Children make very good progress in education from their starting points, including children who have been out of school for a long time. Leaders have recently noted that children who are residential make the most progress. This demonstrates the added value that staying in residence can bring to children. When new children join the residential setting, this is planned well. The pace of introduction is individual and guided by the child's own understanding and ability to cope with the change.

Children's physical health and mental health are very high priorities. A specialised well-being team considers the child and their family in all aspects of their school life. This work impacts positively on children's overall well-being and development.

During the periods of national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff worked hard to keep in contact with all the children. Each child enjoyed a daily telephone call from a staff member. This enabled children to maintain valuable relationships with staff. This was also useful to parents, who received support during this difficult period.

Residential accommodation is good quality, homely and well suited to children's needs. It allows for the close supervision of the children. The gardens provide a lovely space for the children to enjoy. Children are proud of their garden, which contains a vegetable plot. Currently, children access their residence by walking around the external area instead of via the usual internal corridor, because of maintenance work that is required. This internal area looks unsightly. There are plans in place to resolve this, because the organisation understands the importance of a well-maintained, homely environment for children.

There is not always a first-aider on duty in line with the school's own policy. This shortfall has only developed very recently and has not impacted on the children.

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

Children are safe and protected. Staff know their responsibilities in keeping children safe. They use the school's procedures to pass on any concerning information to their manager. Children have trusted relationships with staff. As a result, children feel confident to tell staff if there is a problem. There are generally good responses from staff in relation to safeguarding concerns. There has been one isolated incident where a child-protection referral was not made when it should have been. Lessons have been learned from this. There is a strong safeguarding culture in this school.

There are exceptionally strong relationships with other professionals. For example, the police come to the school regularly. They support staff, pupils and parents with a range of issues. This helps the school keep up to date with emerging risks in the community.

Staff monitor the children when they are online. Staff are not risk-averse and work with children so that they are able to manage risks, rather than be sheltered from them. However, more clarity is needed in the children's risk assessments, for example in relation to when children use their own mobile phones to access the internet when they are in residence.

Behaviour management is good because staff spend time investing in relationships with children. Children know what to expect and are supported to improve their behaviour. Staff are very good at supporting children with their anxiety and stress. Children learn how to self-regulate their emotions. Overall, this has a positive impact on their behaviour.

There have been some issues identified with the safety of the building since the last inspection. Leaders had already identified these shortfalls. The appointment of new health and safety personnel with more clearly defined roles has secured good progress.

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

Some shortfalls have started to emerge, which were identified at this inspection. Leaders of the school are working on plans to make sure the matters are addressed. Some areas of monitoring could be improved. For example, during the inspection, the daily monitoring of the building did not pick up that a faulty electrical item had been left in the residential setting. At no time have these shortfalls impacted on children.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges faced by leaders, considerable progress has been made in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have remained focused on the support needs of children, and this has helped children and their families get through some very challenging times. For example, the school provided food parcels to assist some families who were self-isolating during the pandemic, and staff have helped children to buy gifts for special occasions when they were unable to go shopping for important family events.

Leaders and managers provided very good support to staff during the lockdown periods of the pandemic, and this meant that staff were ready for the challenge when the school reopened. One staff member described the support as being 'over and above' and said that this helped her personally get through pandemic. Another staff member said: 'We were more together than when we were apart.'

New initiatives have continued. For example, the new school dog helps children cope better with anxiety and stress. There are several examples of where this has worked well. For instance, the dog was there to greet a child who was particularly anxious about returning to school when it reopened. The dog has also been instrumental in supporting children to have their required COVID-19 tests. In another initiative, some families have found the school's research into how to support children with sleep problems has made a positive difference to their family life.

They have found new ways of working during the pandemic, which have worked well. Virtual meetings have enabled parents who live further away to be more involved. Leaders have viewed the pandemic as an opportunity for development. Their can-do approach has continued to make a difference to children, both at school and in their family and home life.

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

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

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell, and ensures that children's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing is promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines (including controlled drugs) and dealing with medical emergencies. Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (Safe and Secure Handling of Medicines). This is in relation to ensuring that there is a first-aider on duty at all times, in line with the school's own policy. (National Minimum Standard 3.6)

### **Recommendation**

- Children's risk assessments should include detail about their online safety and how this should be managed by staff. This is in relation to when children use mobile phones with internet access in residence.

### **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:** SC008761

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Jenny McConnell

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspector**

Caroline Brailsford, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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