

Dawn House Residential 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 residential special school. It is one of two schools run by the national charity Speech and Language UK. There are currently 80 children on the roll, ranging 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 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 September 2022.

This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the school.

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 June 2023

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: 20 September 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are happy and relaxed when they are in the residential provision. Staff know them well and respond well to their individual, complex needs. For example, a member of staff observed the behaviour of a child and responded accordingly to ensure that the child's anxieties were reduced. Staff use humour to cajole children, and the children respond well.

Children enjoy a range of activities and clubs after school. For example, children enjoyed putting on a performance at the music club for parents and carers. They were also busy getting ready for a fundraising event during their school sports day. They go swimming, play football and ride bikes, among many other activities. Children also relax by watching music videos or playing games. Staff will source activities for children if a child has a particular interest, highlighting how staff consider each child as an individual.

Children are supported to be as independent as possible. They learn a range of life skills, such as personal hygiene, shopping and cooking. They are also supported to do laundry and keep their rooms tidy. A parent said, 'My child has become much more independent and has learnt many life skills.'

The residential, teaching and therapy teams work collaboratively to ensure that children receive the same approach from all staff. This makes sure that children are provided with consistent boundaries and guidance.

Staff value children's views, wishes and feelings. They regularly seek children's views, but this is not captured well. For example, a discussion may be recorded in the daily notes, which clearly highlights how the member of staff is considering a child's views, but this could be lost in the volume of daily records over time.

Staff support the continued health and well-being of the children. Nutritious meals are provided, but at times there is a lack of understanding regarding all children's preferences. Alternative meals are provided, but the choice is limited to quick and easy options, such as spaghetti on toast.

Children have good access to therapeutic support from a range of qualified therapists. Therapists link in with the residential provision via children's therapy-based targets and independent living skills.

One young adult has equipment he brought from home when he first started his stays in residence several years ago. This equipment may now be deemed inappropriate for his age because it is more generally associated with younger children. Staff have not fully explored this with him or sought therapeutic support to help him reduce his need for this equipment. Nevertheless, staff have worked hard with this young adult to build his communication skills and confidence. He is a very

helpful young adult who enjoys helping the maintenance team with jobs around the school and grounds. He is now looking forward to moving to a residential college because of the support he has received from the staff in the residential provision and the school.

Medication is generally well managed and safe. However, processes could be strengthened to ensure that medical information is updated regularly and that staff do not dispense medication from boxes that have an incorrect prescription label. Furthermore, there is not currently an audit trail for medication that is moved from the residential provision to the school medication cupboard for the purposes of disposal. The current system means that medication waiting to be returned to the pharmacy could be lost, and no one would know.

Children who access the residential provision have good attendance at school. Children make significant progress with their attendance. For example, a child who had not accessed any form of education for some time before attending this school is now fully accessing the school. Staff and parents worked together to support the child's reintegration back into school alongside accessing the residential provision. This has allowed the child to improve his outcomes, participate in activities and socialise with his peers.

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

There is a strong safeguarding culture within the school. There are clear and effective systems to ensure the safety of children. Staff have a good understanding of systems for reporting low-level concerns as well as more serious concerns. They know how to keep children safe. The safeguarding team includes members of the senior leadership group, including the residential services manager (RSM). They work proactively with external safeguarding agencies to support children and their families. The recording of safeguarding concerns is very detailed. However, although this is important, it means that the concern or action being recorded can be lost in the detail. This could impact on the leaders' ability to oversee safeguarding concerns effectively.

Staff have warm and nurturing relationships with children. Staff recognise when children need emotional support and know what to do to support them. For example, staff will go for a walk with one child or distract them with a game. Staff know what works best to support the child.

Children form positive friendships with each other. They generally get on well with each other. Bullying is not an issue in the residential provision.

Children enjoy accessing the internet on varying devices. Staff can monitor what the children access via the school's online security system. Children can bring mobile phones into the residential provision, but usage is closely monitored. Staff work closely with parents to keep children as safe as possible while they are online.

Risk assessments are detailed and show the risks and vulnerabilities of each child. The same risk assessments are used in both the residential and educational provisions to ensure consistency. There is currently some development work being undertaken around the format of the risk assessment to improve its overall quality.

The behaviour of children is generally good. They are polite, helpful and chatty. Incidents are rare in the residential provision. Staff support children well to manage their own behaviour. Incidents tend to be low-level and do not involve physical intervention. Staff receive training in physical intervention and use de-escalation techniques well. Children are given consequences on rare occasions. These are recorded in the incident record. There is no separate log for this, which makes management oversight of consequences difficult.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the residential provision's strengths and areas for development. They have good plans for developing the service and addressing shortfalls. The previous failed national minimum standards are being addressed.

There has been a focus on staff building relationships with children, and this is a strength. There is an established team of staff who bring a wealth of experience. Most are qualified or completing the appropriate qualification. Staff are offered good training opportunities that provide them with the skills and knowledge they require to provide good care for children.

The current RSM is experienced and qualified but will be leaving her position at the end of this term. There are plans to recruit for this post over the summer. The leadership role is being developed to empower staff and delegate some responsibilities, such as appraisals, to other leaders.. This has proved successful.

The RSM is child-focused and dedicated to her role. She is passionate about providing a good residential service for children. She knows the team and the children very well. However, recording systems do not capture information such as children's wishes and views effectively, and oversight of a range of records is not straightforward because the information tends to be within lots of other information. The current RSM knows all this information, but the lack of effective monitoring systems will make it difficult for the new manager to oversee systems and processes.

The team dynamics within the residential provision are not always good. This does not currently impact on the care children receive. However, some staff report that they feel frustrated and not part of the team. Nevertheless, staff feel supported by the principal and the RSM through supervision and the appraisal process. However, supervision and appraisal records are not reflective of the concerns staff said they have reported within the support framework. It is important to ensure that staff concerns are recorded so that they are fully explored and resolved.

The school advisory board has appointed a residential champion who is also a parent. This provides him with invaluable insight into the service. The residential champion has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. He plans to visit the residential provision regularly. Together with the in-depth, regular visits from the independent visitor, they provide good external oversight. The school advisory board then reports to the overarching education committee.

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

Points for improvement

- The registered person should ensure that medication is dispensed as per the prescription label, or if the dispensing label is incorrect, the medication should be returned to parents or the pharmacy. They should ensure that children's medical information is up to date and that there is a clear audit trail for medication as it moves around the school. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 12.6)
- The registered person should ensure that children's meals are based on their likes and dislikes. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 11.1)
- The registered person should consider ways of improving the team dynamics within the residential provision. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.5)
- The registered person should strengthen recording systems to ensure information is captured more effectively and oversight of records is more straightforward. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards, Appendix B)
- The registered person should consider strategies to support children who use equipment that may no longer be deemed age-appropriate once they leave the school. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 7.3)

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

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