

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 residential special school. It is one of two schools run by the national charity Speech and Language UK. All children have difficulties with speech, language and communication.

The residential service operates Monday to Thursday in term time. There are 112 children on the school roll, of whom five use the overnight residential provision at any one time. The residential provision also operates an extended after-school provision for children.

The residential accommodation is located on the school site. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision on the site.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 October 2025

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: 26 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Overnight stays provide children with valuable opportunities to build independence and develop friendships. They also support progress in specific target areas, helping to improve their overall outcomes.

Learning is embedded throughout each day. It begins with school and continues seamlessly into the residential provision. Staff extend the learning by creating meaningful opportunities that feel like play, but children are learning and building on their social skills. For example, playing games that promote taking turns, showing patience towards others and respecting rules and boundaries.

The children's wishes and views are sought and captured in a variety of ways. This can be as part of a group where children are discussing a particular topic, or the view of a child is being sought on a one-to-one basis. Staff are mindful of each child's unique communication needs and are skilled at adapting their approach to meet the child's specific needs.

Staff encourage children to lead healthy lifestyles, including access to regular physical activity and a nutritious balanced diet. Staff have engaged children in meaningful discussions to support their individual health needs.

There has been a proactive focus on enhancing the working approach between school and care staff. Both teams meet on a regular basis to exchange crucial information relating to the day-to-day care of the children. In addition, this forum is used to reflect on the progress of the child and set their future targets.

Staff support children to develop empathy, tolerance and respect for their peers. For example, a child was patient when her friend was forming their words and did not speak up for them. In addition, the older children also support the younger ones and act as positive role models.

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

Children are encouraged to take age-appropriate risks in a safe and supported way. Some children have progressed to walking without direct supervision and using public transport. These experiences help children build on their confidence and gain a sense of independence. Staff remain mindful of potential risks and safeguards are in place to keep children safe.

Staff build on their knowledge of the children and the most appropriate way to support them and keep them safe. However, not all the children have risk assessments that show all significant areas of known risk. This means that these documents do not provide staff with all the necessary guidance on how to meet the children's needs on a day-to-day basis and ensure that they remain safe.

When children take medication as part of their health and well-being planning, managers have ensured that this process is safe. When errors and discrepancies have occurred, these are identified through a robust system of auditing.

Children have clearly defined boundaries and expectations. There have been no physical interventions. This reflects a very settled residential cohort. Staff are adept at using their trusting relationships with children to manage any increasing anxieties. This promotes a calmer and nurturing environment for the children.

Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints from children. Children told inspectors how they can, and who they can, speak to if they have a worry or a complaint. This information is also presented in another format that is understandable.

All required recruitment checks have been completed to ensure that individuals employed to support the children are suitable and safe to do so. On occasions, when agency workers have been used, they have undergone the necessary vetting processes. This consistent approach helps to ensure that all adults working with the children are appropriately assessed and deemed safe to provide care and support.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, the care team has welcomed two new members of staff, as two members of staff left. The new staff have brought ideas to enhance the provision and there is a renewed sense of energy and focus in the team.

The head of care, alongside the senior leadership team, are committed to enhancing the residential provision. Each leader has been allocated a specific area of development to focus on. This joint accountability is providing a positive opportunity to enhance the provision and provide some focus for the future and to drive forward improvements.

The recently appointed staff have undertaken a thorough induction. They have engaged with various departmental staff, gaining insight into their roles and how each contributes to the school to enhance the experience for the children.

Staff receive regular, good-quality supervision. Staff explore their own training and developmental needs and targets are set to develop their practice. Staff are of the view that they are provided with regular learning opportunities that enhance their care approach.

Team meetings occur on a regular basis. There is a set agenda that is followed. Incidents are discussed and staff can reflect on their practice and consider how any changes could be adopted for the benefit of the children.

The governor linked to residential setting provision has a good understanding of its function and how it complements the children's education curriculum. They are aware of the current challenges, but they are a strong supporter of the provision and the valuable opportunity that residential provides for children who attend.

The independent person has recently changed. They are undertaking their visits and becoming familiar with the provision and how they are supporting children. The children are aware of the changes and what their role is.

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 for residential special schools:

- The school should ensure that all staff are aware that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility throughout the school and its residential facilities. This includes all information relating to potential and known risks being shared with staff in school and residential provision. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.2)

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

Telephone number: 01623 795361

Email address: J.McConnell@dawnhouse-ican.notts.sch.uk

Inspectors

Lizette Watts, Social Care inspector

Simon Hunter, Social Care inspector

Chloe Harvey, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025