

# Dawn House Residential School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC008761
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 March 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Dawn Taylor
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	21 November 2007

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

Dawn House is a residential special school for children and young people aged between 5 and 19 years old who have been assessed as having severe speech language and communication difficulties. The school is part of a national charitable organisation known as I CAN. There are 82 pupils attending the school, 32 of which are boarders. Boys represent 25 of these places with 7 placements for girls. Boarding provision helps to support children who live a significant distance away from the area. The school is located in a village and has access to public transport and amenities such as shops and leisure facilities. The pre 16 children board in the Chimes. Post 16 pupils board in the area known as the Courtyard, which has 3 separate residences. The Chimes is split into four house areas known as Rufford, Chatsworth, Shire and Wollaton, each with its own staff group. All houses are within the grounds of the school.

### Summary

Dawn House School was inspected over three days by one Ofsted inspector. This inspection is a key inspection that looks at the key standards from the Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards and previous recommendations.

The overall outcome judgement for Dawn House School is outstanding. Being healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution and Organisation are all judged to be outstanding. Economic Wellbeing is judged to be good. All previous recommendations are met.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### Improvements since the last inspection

Dawn House School responded promptly to the issues identified at the last inspection. The school was asked to carry out risk assessments with regard to the poor lighting within the school grounds, hot water tap temperatures and the broken electronic front gates. Risk assessments have been carried out and appropriate action taken to ensure the safety and well being of boarders. The school were also asked to ensure the system for recruiting staff who will work with children included a check of identity against an official document, which should be verifiable in recruitment records. All staff files now hold appropriate evidence that this check is taking place.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The physical, emotional and mental health needs of each boarder are actively identified and promoted by a skilled professional team of staff that include a nursing auxiliary, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, an art therapist, learning support assistants, teachers and residential childcare officers. From initial assessment, throughout schooling and on through to transition the school provides boarders with age appropriate guidance, advice and support on health and personal care issues. This is delivered through a range of forums that include a 'lads' group', individual discussions with the nursing ancillary and the school curriculum.

Each individual boarder's particular health needs are identified in their health plan, which sits alongside an individual education plan and care plan. These are monitored and reviewed by the boarder, nursing ancillary and their core team on a regular basis. Each core team is made up of a teacher, residential childcare officer, learning support assistant and speech and language therapist. Depending upon the identified health need of each boarder this core team might also include an occupational therapist, the nursing ancillary or another relevant health professional.

Boarders' health needs are further promoted by an informative range of policies and procedures that are known to all staff and proactively implemented in practice. Information on health and wellbeing, and teaching aids related to these areas, are produced in formats appropriate to boarders. For example, social stories and symbols are used to help individual's learn intimate care tasks.

All staff, including ancillary staff, receive induction and on going training on speech, language and communication, first aid and other health related topics. Some of the senior students have a first aid qualification. All staff administering medication undertake Boots Chemist handling and administration of medication training. Boots Chemist also undertakes a six monthly audit of the school's storage, administration and records of medicines, there are no recommendations from these audits.

Boarders are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs by a team of experienced catering staff who are integral to the life of the school. Dawn House School has a five star excellent standards rating from Mansfield District Council for 'Scores on the doors'. This is based on cleanliness and practices, physical structures and confidence in management. The school has also achieved the Healthy Schools Award. All catering staff are appropriately qualified in addition to achieving the intermediate certificate in food safety.

Boarders are actively involved in the development of menus and dining arrangements. The school's student councils meet with the catering manager and taste new menu ideas and have developed rules for the dining room. Whilst speech and language therapists work with staff to develop tools that support all students to be consulted on catering arrangements at the school. Boarders feel that their views are appreciated and the menu is adjusted accordingly.

Boarders are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and fresh fruit is always available in the boarding houses. Menus are on display and boarders can choose from a selection of meals. Vegetarian and culturally appropriate foods are available. Mealtimes are seen as social events that help young people with differing communication difficulties improve their social interactions.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' safety is promoted because staff listen and take appropriate actions to ensure their welfare.

Boarders state that the school respects their privacy and confidentiality. Staff ensure that boarders' privacy is respected by modelling and teaching appropriate sensitive practice. This is reflected in the school's policies, procedures and guidance to staff. Confidential information about boarders is appropriately stored.

The school has an effective complaints procedure and information about this is available to boarders' and parents in a range of formats. Boarders' know how to complain and can name a range of people they are confident to speak to. Boarders and staff feel because issues are raised quickly and are proactively addressed there is little need for people to use the formal complaints procedure.

Dawn House School has a safeguarding procedure that is reviewed and updated on a regular basis by the school and I CAN and has also been reviewed by an agency external to the school. Staff are well informed and have up to date information on local safeguarding procedures. The school has nominated safeguarding officers who have attended the local authority's safeguarding training. The school refers appropriate cases to the relevant authorities and notifies parents and other agencies in line with their safeguarding procedures.

Boarders' identify a range of staff they can contact to discuss any worries about bullying and any concerns raised are quickly addressed. The school is proactive in reviewing practice to reduce incidents of bullying. For example, a school entrance has recently been moved and a new procedure introduced to increase staff presence and the management of students going out and coming in from outdoor break times. The school's policy and procedure on unauthorised absences are clear and staff are aware of them. There have been no incidents since the last inspection.

The school policy states 'research shows that the key element in successful behaviour interventions is strong and positive relationships with adults involved' and the boarders' strongly believe that the school achieves this. Staff have outstanding understanding of children with a severe and/or complex communication difficulties. Staff are successful in achieving high standards of behaviour 'through developing an atmosphere, which is calm, orderly and purposeful and an ethos, which is positive and celebrates achievement'. Boarders' are encouraged, guided and taught how to understand what conduct is expected of them in various situations, control and manage their own conduct and actions, and employ appropriate strategies when they experience difficulties.

Boarders' express confidence in the safety and security of the school. They learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they regularly practise the emergency escape drill and staff receive fire training. Safe procedures are in place to protect boarders through tests on fire systems and other electrical equipment at appropriate intervals. Environmental risk assessments are in place and systematically ensure that all potential hazards are identified and reduced.

The school continues to operate a robust staff vetting procedure. Staff recruitment files contain clear evidence of recruitment checks that have taken place prior to staff being employed. This includes an appropriate enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check. All adults who visit the boarding accommodation are supervised by staff. This excellent practice ensures that boarders' are appropriately safeguarded.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' educational progress is being consistently and dynamically promoted by the core team of staff. Each boarder has targets set in their individual education plan and this overlaps with their care plan. These are regularly monitored and reviewed by the core team and in the

annual review. The school operates effective communication systems that ensure any support or equipment required by boarders is available to them in the boarding environment, as well as during education.

Speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and art therapy are an integral part of Dawn House School. Boarders' speech and language targets are embedded in their learning across education and boarding. Both the speech and language therapists and the occupational therapist can see boarders on an individual basis but also work alongside staff in lessons, running joint sessions and in the boarding houses.

Dawn House School uses Paget Gorman Signed Speech to support boarder's learning, and staff, boarders and parents receive training to implement this. The use of symbols is also encouraged to develop both spoken and written expression. The school also promotes the use of a range of voice output devices to support individual boarder's communication.

Boarders have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community. The range of activities on offer, the on going development of leisure facilities in the boarding houses, the continual development of staff and the commitment to promoting social skills, independence and community involvement is a strength of Dawn House School. The school makes excellent use of its own facilities and continues to introduce new interests and hobbies. For example, staff are currently undertaking Duke of Edinburgh training.

All boarders receive an individualised service in line with their needs and wishes or particular support needs or problems. This is achieved by effective, well established relationships with staff who provide a range of help, guidance and support when needed or requested. Boarders state 'the staff are great' and 'the staff are my favourite thing'. One boarder when asked what he will miss about the school when he leaves later this year stated 'the staff, they are always fun and there to listen'.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and influence the way the school operates. The staff are continuing to develop forums and communication tools that promote boarders' independence, social skills and community involvement. A boarder's right to communicate and express a view is key to the school's values and ethos and runs throughout their policies, procedures, staff guidance and information for parents and local education authorities. Boarders are consulted about every aspect of their care and education as well as activities and social events. They are also enabled to raise issues through formal structures such as the student councils and house meetings or informally through staff or the head teacher. The opinions and views of boarders are proactively taken into account when decisions affecting welfare and the development of boarding are made.

Boarders' experience of admission to the school, transition during schooling and leaving is positive and well planned. There are clear policies, procedures and staff guidance that is well known to staff and proactively put into practice. All boarders have an initial assessment that is undertaken over two days at the school and all new parents are visited by a family and community liaison worker before their child starts at Dawn House School. Boarders feel well

supported by staff and peers when they first arrive. One boarder said 'other children helped me. I didn't get lost because they showed me where I needed to go'.

Staff are well informed of boarders' needs because they gather detailed information prior to placement and throughout a young person's education. This information is then sensitively and appropriately shared between departments and with external professionals. The school undertakes excellent work to promote the rights of young people with speech, language or communication difficulties to have equal rights of access to work experience, further education and employment. This is achieved in partnership with parents who are geographically dispersed.

Boarders' assessed care needs are identified in a care plan, which is monitored and regularly reviewed by the core team of staff. This is a detailed plan, which sits alongside other documentation and specifically states how the school will care for each boarding pupil in accordance with his or her assessed needs and wishes. Each boarder has a key worker within the school who provides individual guidance and support in addition to the team of boarding staff also available to them. Boarders are supported to be meaningfully involved in their care plan and annual review by their key workers. All care workers work holistically with other professionals to meet any identified need whether it be a health, educational or speech, language and communication need.

Boarders' relationships and contact with parents, family and friends is actively promoted by staff at Dawn House School. Working in partnership with parents is further promoted by two family and community liaison workers who are employed specifically to liaise with parents. They meet with parents prior to a child's placement and continue to have contact to discuss key issues, explore work experience placements near to home or support with transition either within Dawn House School or on to employment or further education.

The school promotes contact with parents through telephone calls, newsletters home, regular individual reports, social events and parents days. Parents are welcome to telephone the school to speak to members of staff and there are pay phones available for boarders to call family and friends if they haven't got their own mobile phone.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Dawn House School has a good standard of accommodation for its boarders. There are two houses, The Chimes is for pre-sixteen year old boys and girls and the Courtyard for post sixteen boys and girls. The accommodation continues to be developed with an on going programme of refurbishment raising the standard even higher. This work demonstrates the commitment by Dawn House School to providing boarders with a high standard of boarding accommodation.

The accommodation is very homely, comfortable, well heated and lit. All boarders now have individual bedrooms, which they can choose to personalise. Boarders are proud of their houses and the facilities available to them. The development and refurbishment of communal leisure spaces, dormitories into single bedrooms and bathrooms has been well received and appreciated by boarders. There are an appropriate number of washing facilities. All accommodation is maintained to a good standard by a team of support staff. These are employed by the school, as opposed to external contractors, and are very loyal and knowledgeable in an emergency.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a clear written statement of the school's care principles and practices for boarders, which accurately describes what the school sets out to do for those young people it accommodates, and the manner in which care is provided. Parents, staff and boarders have access to a range of detailed informative information, policies and procedures, available in a range of mediums and formats.

Boarders are looked after by staff who they feel understand their needs and promote their rights. Staff have excellent knowledge and experience of boarders with speech, language and communication difficulties. There is one team of staff who work Monday to Friday every week and provide a continuity that has allowed respectful, trusting friendships to develop with boarders. Staff are assigned to boarding houses but can also move fluidly between the houses to ensure the best member of staff is available to achieve each task or activity. Boarders' praise of staff is outstanding and is a strong feature of this school.

Boarders are looked after by staff who are themselves proactively supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting boarders' welfare and meeting their individual needs. All staff receive a comprehensive induction, regular supervision and annual three hundred and sixty degree appraisals. All staff are provided with comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance that promotes the strong values and ethos of the school. Training events are frequent and staff comment positively on the quality of the courses.

Dawn House School has substantial strengths and where areas for improvement emerge the school recognises and manages them well. There are very clear lines of management and communication. The senior management team provide effective monitoring and evaluation of relevant records and events such as complaints, child protection and discipline logs. The school was successful in being re-assessed for Investors in People status in January 2009.

Consultation and regular communication ensures proper scrutiny and advancement of all aspects of a boarder's care. Any shortfalls in these areas are identified and addressed very quickly. This quality monitoring and other similar initiatives contribute to the school's overall strategic aim and implementation.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The environment promotes the individual and diverse identities of boarders and this uniqueness is celebrated in a way that promotes awareness and understanding. All staff are sensitive to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of boarders and this is promoted through the school curriculum, assemblies and daily discussions. Boarders' enriched care and educational experience is underpinned by the school's coherent philosophy, values and strong management team. Dawn House School succeeds in meeting their stated objective to 'promote a learning environment which enables all pupils to fulfil their potential and which reflects in a positive way, the range of cultures and experiences of the whole community'.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):