

Dawn House Residential School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Dawn Taylor
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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. 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. Children board Monday to Friday. The pre-16 children board in the Chimes. Post-16 pupils board in the area known as the Courtyard, which has three 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.

The overall outcome judgement for Dawn House School continues to be outstanding. Being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation are all judged to remain outstanding. Economic well-being is judged to be good.

Boarders were actively involved in the inspection process. They stated that the boarding experience at Dawn House School is 'Phenomenal', 'excellent', 'great fun' and 'outstanding'.

Dawn House School continues to provide holistic, high quality care to boarders. It works collaboratively with a multi-disciplinary staff team to ensure all boarders achieve the best possible progress and highest levels of personal achievement. Key strengths are the dynamic staff teams, consultation processes for boarders, partnership work with parents, and boarders' access to activities and the wider community.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no previous actions or recommendations.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health care needs continue to be proactively addressed by the school's network of specialist staff; this includes a nursing auxiliary, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, an art therapist, learning support assistants, teachers and residential childcare officers. Their success is further enhanced by the partnership work undertaken with parents and external professionals.

Boarders' health care needs are promoted throughout their education from initial assessment through to transition onto further education or employment. For example, pre-entry assessment is undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team and pre-entry assessment reports evidence

recommendations for personalised programmes, including support for young people who have specific health support needs.

The school provides boarders with age-appropriate guidance, advice and support on health and personal care issues. For example, social stories and symbols are used to help individual's learn intimate care tasks. Guidance and education is also delivered through a wide range of forums that include a lads group, a girls group that links with a local mainstream school, individual discussions with the nursing auxiliary and the whole school commitment to Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL).

The school operates highly effective medication policies, procedures and practice guidance, which are implemented extremely well. For example, before a boarder is given responsibility for their own medication a rigorous risk assessment is completed to decide whether they can do this safely. Any such risk assessment is recorded and reviewed on a frequent basis and amendments made where necessary. Safe storage for such medication is always available when required.

Each individual boarder's particular health needs are clearly identified in their health plan, which sits alongside an individual education plan and care plan. These are monitored and reviewed by the boarder, nursing auxiliary 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 auxiliary or another relevant health professional. Information is passed confidentially between staff to promote consistent practice between academic, therapeutic and pastoral staff regarding all welfare matters.

All staff, including auxiliary staff, receive a comprehensive induction and on going training on speech, language and communication, first aid and other health related topics. Some of the senior students also hold a first aid qualification. All staff administering medication undertake handling and administration of medication training. Pharmacists also undertake 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 include food from different cultures, caters for dietary restrictions and requirements and encourages young people to try new dishes. Healthy choices and lifestyles are promoted throughout the school, for example fundraising for Sports Relief with a cycling event. Kitchen staff are experienced and trained to an advanced standard. They remain integral to the life of the school, catering on a daily basis as well as for key events such as the pupil participation day, the school leavers' ball and other special occasions. Dawn House School maintains 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.

Boarders are actively involved in the development of menus and dining arrangements. The school's student council meet with the catering manager and any young person can speak to him directly or give written feedback at any time. Boarders state 'the food is great', 'if I don't like something I can ask for something else', 'we have a choice of healthy options at breakfast and lunchtime' and 'the staff in the kitchen are brilliant'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' welfare continues to be protected by a professional staff team who assess risk and promote staying safe at all times. Staff are supported by a range of detailed written policies and procedures. These underpin an excellent training programme that further informs their practice.

The school is successful in meeting its aim to ensure 'the health, safety and welfare of pupils are of prime concern at all time'. For example, a high regard continues to be placed on young people's rights to privacy and the confidentiality of personal information. Staff ensure that boarders' privacy is respected by modelling and teaching appropriate sensitive practice. Bullying is not identified as a problem at the school. It is viewed as totally unacceptable and is challenged on an individual and group basis when encountered. There have been no unauthorised absences from the school since the last inspection. Staff are trained, familiar and confident in using practice and procedures that safeguard boarders and secure outstanding outcomes for young people.

There are comprehensive child protection procedures in place that are regularly reviewed. The designated child protection officers and key staff attend external training to maintain their knowledge of national and local child protection procedures. All staff have attended internal child protection training. Staff respond in a very professional and knowledgeable way to any concerns about boarders' safety.

There are effective mechanisms in place for addressing complaints. Boarders are encouraged to voice their concerns if they are unhappy about any aspect or experience at school. Staff are professional with their judgements and clear when a complaint should be referred as a safeguarding concern. Staff understand language impairment and issues of misinterpretation for boarders, and are experienced at managing complex complaints, this achieves positive learning outcomes for the service and the individual.

Staff and the student council reinforce positive behaviour and this helps young people develop self-esteem and self-belief. Boarders are encouraged and supported to behave in ways that will sustain them in the community once they have achieved independence. Staff focus on providing behavioural boundaries that are fair and easily understood. The student council have campaigned to develop and enhance these with their peers. There is a strong focus on promoting effective and supportive networks as well as a strong sense of community and respect for others. The clear behaviour management policy, together with this established support structure provide outstanding opportunities for boarders to learn good social skills. This, in turn, has the positive effect of creating a harmonious environment in the school. A parent stated 'staff have developed positive relationships with pupils and high but realistic expectations and boundaries'.

There are effective systems in place that ensure the physical safety and security of boarders. The school has comprehensive risk assessments that are updated regularly for all aspects of safety. These assessments include premises, fire, boarders' behaviour and activities. Staff have a strong understanding of the need to ensure safety whilst promoting and developing independence. Safe procedures are in place to protect boarders through tests on fire systems and other electrical equipment at appropriate intervals. The newly installed fire alarm system

in further education residences and the new parking system for vehicles entering the site demonstrate the school's continuing commitment to ensuring the safety of young people.

The school has in place a robust vetting and selection procedure. The senior management team ensure that staff employed at the school are deemed suitable to work with children. Members of the senior leadership group have attended advanced training on safer recruitment practices. 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.

Individual support to boarders is outstanding and given a high priority by the school. One boarder stated 'the school are good at helping us achieve targets, goals and give good inspiration to myself and all students'. Boarders are encouraged and supported by staff to have positive experiences socially and educationally. A parent stated 'the school does a good job at linking with the care facilities. Pupils well-being and independence seem to be a high priority. My son really enjoys all of the activities that are arranged each evening'.

Staff and managers demonstrate a professional and sensitive insight into the needs of the young people for whom they provide a service. Boarders' educational progress continues to be 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 reviews.

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 remains 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. The school provides an environment where all communication is accepted, valued and developed. This includes signing, use of symbols, supportive writing software, gestures as well as electronic voice output communication aids.

Boarders have excellent access to activities both within the school and in the local community. One parent stated 'the school provides a wide range of activities and experiences for pupils both on-site and within the local community and promotes inclusion'. The residential childcare officers are dynamic and creative in the activities they make available to boarders. They are also outstanding at developing, and then promoting individuals' independence and sense of self.

A key strength of Dawn House School is its acknowledgement and celebration of individual and group achievements. These might range from the boarders' success at staging an evening fashion show, the triumph of a school end of year ball for pupils making to transition to further education and those leaving the school or the Diana Memorial Award given to a young person who demonstrated compassion, leadership and selflessness in their community.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The consultation and active involvement of boarders in the life and development of boarding is outstanding. They feel that their views and opinions are valued and that they can make a difference to matters affecting their daily lives and operation of the school. Systems of listening to and obtaining the views of boarders are fully integrated into the running of the school and are imaginative and effective in capturing their honest opinions. For example, the student council meets on a regular basis and has recently made a DVD on their role within the school and will be shown at an external conference; two elected students represent their peers at the school's governing body meeting and in October 2009; a Pupil Participation Conference was held at Dawn House School for students in the further education department, and their peers from other local schools, to provide further opportunities for sharing and expressing their views.

Staff continue 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 and parents experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes. From initial assessment through to transition onto further education or employment, boarders and parents are supported and guided by a multi-disciplinary team of professional staff that includes the family support team.

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.

The school has outstanding working relationships with parents, which is seen as an essential aspect to individualised support. Boarders are supported to remain in regular contact with their parents and family through phone calls and e-mails, although residential placements only run Monday to Friday. The school promotes easy access to key staff and the family support team. Working in partnership creatively is another key strength of the staff who maintain relationships with parents who are geographically dispersed. All parents of boarders not only receive regular reports on the educational progress of their child but on their social and emotional development within the boarding community and are actively involved in transition planning and Connexions involvement in the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Dawn House School has a good standard of accommodation for its boarders that continues to be developed and upgraded. There are two houses, the Chimes is for pre-16 year old boys and girls and the Courtyard for post-16 boys and girls. Since the last inspection a new fire alarm

system has been fitted to the further education accommodation and shower and bathrooms continue to be refurbished across both houses. This represents a significant investment and is an indication of the school's commitment to provide a high quality boarding environment.

Boarders continue to be proud of their houses and the facilities available to them. Boarders' sleeping accommodation is comfortable and decorated to a good standard. Individual rooms reflect the interests and tastes of the boarders who sleep there. Boarders have access to toilet and washing facilities that supports their privacy. Boarders stated the accommodation provided is 'cool', 'great', 'like a second home', 'cosy'. 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 management and organisation of the school's welfare and boarding provision is outstanding. The school has a very effective and co-ordinated senior leadership team. Care provision is well managed, and is an integral part of the whole school provision. Managers ensure that the welfare of boarders is given first consideration and the school communicates this approach clearly to staff and boarders.

There are high staffing levels available to boarders and they are trained and supported to deliver consistent, high quality boarding services. The style of management ensures that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and that boarders feel that the school is run with their welfare and safety as its primary concern. The quality of staff at Dawn House School remains a key strength for both parents and boarders with comments such as 'they are fun', 'they are my friends', 'very professional', 'excellent at communicating with parents' and 'always approachable'.

Managers have an excellent insight into how well boarders are being looked after. Boarding staff are led by a conscientious and effective head of residential care who is accountable to the principal. Staff deliver professional and supportive services because they work in partnership with each other and as a team. One parent stated 'staff are considerate and caring. They all interact in good and positive ways with the children. The care staff should be highly commended for their support and dedication'

The school provides a very clear and detailed statement of boarding principles and practice to parents and staff. There are excellent policies and boarding practice guidance, kept under review, known by staff, helping to ensure boarders are well looked after during their time at the school. In addition, boarders' welfare is promoted by well established and extensive monitoring systems. Managers have a clear overview of boarding operations, which helps to ensure that boarders are supported in a consistent and safe manner. These arrangements guard against complacency and help to deliver consistent, high quality boarding services.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school's ethos is carried out in practice where all boarders are treated as individuals with equal concern and consideration. The school welcomes referrals from any cultural, ethnic, racial or religious background and offers each boarder a tolerant and respectful environment.

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

There are no recommendations.