

# Dawn House School

Helmsley Road, Rainworth, Mansfield, NG21 0DQ

## Inspection dates

11–12 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The principal's drive to secure success for all pupils, academically and socially, has secured rapid improvements since the previous inspection.
- The quality of provision, including teaching, and the effectiveness of leaders at all levels have improved. As a result, all pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- Teachers use the wealth of accurate information about pupils' progress to make sure activities build on pupils' current understanding and secure individual programmes tailored to their interests and capabilities.
- The senior leadership team comprises specialists in education, care and therapy. This secures high-quality experiences for pupils between the school and the residential provision.
- Students acquire high-quality accreditation, including GCSEs and for those students in the sixth form. They benefit from a wide range of college courses and work experiences.
- The sixth form is also outstanding. Students continue to achieve exceptionally well. As a result, they are responsible and independent young people, ready and well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well and make enormous strides in their ability to manage their own behaviour. They respond positively to the strong and supportive relationships from adults and between each other. Pupils say there is no bullying in school and they feel very safe.
- Middle leaders now have greater responsibility for their areas of work. They are developing new and innovative ways to ensure the school continues to improve.
- The governing body has been strengthened with several new appointments, including the Chair of Governors. Governors have an accurate view of the school's work, because there is an open and honest culture. They make sure that resources have maximum impact on pupils' learning and behaviour.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 11 part-lessons, most of which were joint observations with the principal and the head of school.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders and pupils. Telephone discussions were held with members of the governing body, a senior education adviser and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 26 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 41 responses to the staff questionnaire received during the inspection, as well as the school's most recent survey of parents' views.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including the school's information on pupils' progress, its self-evaluation, development plans and information relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

## Inspection team

Mary Hinds, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Debra McCarthy

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Dawn House educates pupils who all have statements of special educational needs for difficulties with speech, language and communication. Approximately a third of pupils has a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome and/or are on the autistic spectrum.
- The school is one of two run by the national charity 'I CAN'.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is extra funding given to a school by the government to support groups of pupils, including those who are entitled to free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority. The school does not receive pupil premium funding from all the local authorities who place pupils in the school. This is also the case for Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Approximately two thirds of pupils travel in daily to the school. A small minority of pupils are dual registered at this school and other mainstream schools.
- The school includes a residential unit for approximately a fifth of pupils, who live a long distance away from the school. Some sixth form students board weekly at the school. This was last inspected in July 2013 and was not part of this inspection.
- There is a high proportion of pupils starting school in different year groups as pupils join any time up to sixth form. More recently, the youngest pupils have been in Year 2 and the majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 stay on to the sixth form.
- The school uses a range of work placements in local businesses and courses with two local colleges, Vision West Nottingham, and Portland, a specialist further education college, as alternative provision to support students in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- There have been some significant changes in staffing and in the governing body since the previous inspection. These include recent appointments of head of school, a mathematics leader, and chair of the governing body. The principal is currently acting head of care of the residential provision. Senior leaders represent education, therapy and care.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure consistently rapid progress for primary-age pupils by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to investigate mathematics in practical ways
  - ensuring that the outstanding practice in marking is shared across the school
  - giving pupils time to check their own progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- When pupils join the school, they have low levels of attainment. This is the result of the challenges they have in communicating and interacting with others which has hampered their learning. For some pupils this has been further exacerbated as a result of considerable disruption to their education prior to admission.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well because the school carefully tracks pupils' progress and meticulously plans to meet individual needs precisely. Those pupils who do not make rapid progress are given booster sessions in both literacy and mathematics daily until they catch up and achieve and often exceed their challenging targets.
- Taking into account their different starting points, all pupils make outstanding progress in this school and achieve exceptionally well in all key stages, whatever their individual special educational needs or disabilities. Furthermore, those pupils who join the school much later quickly make equally rapid progress.
- The school makes sure all pupils can learn to the best of their ability by focusing on developing their communication skills and ability to engage successfully in their learning. This is the bedrock of all future learning and for pupils' success in their personal development.
- Pupils make exceptional gains in communication. Speech and language therapists work closely with teachers to make sure that no pupil's learning is slowed down. All staff effectively use signing, gestures and pictures, as well the latest technology such as electronic notebooks, to reinforce new learning visually.
- Those pupils with more complex needs such as those with Asperger's syndrome and/or those on the autistic spectrum also make rapid progress. Likewise, those pupils who are eligible for free school meals achieve exceptionally well, because their progress is carefully checked and they are given personalised support and help, partly funded by the pupil premium.
- The younger pupils also make rapid progress, particularly in literacy. However, there are too few practical activities, both inside and outside the classroom, to support their learning in mathematics.
- The success of the systematic daily teaching of handwriting, reading and spelling across the school has significantly improved pupils' English skills. This is now happening in mathematics, which is being taught with equal rigour and success in Key Stage 3 and beyond.
- Pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 study a wide variety of subjects. By the end of Key Stage 4 almost all pupils have made outstanding progress and achieve a range of national qualifications appropriate to their starting points, including GCSEs in English and mathematics, BTECs and work-related studies. Those pupils with complex needs achieve functional skills in English and/or mathematics.
- Sixth formers make rapid gains in their learning. Students continue to gain qualifications and choose from a wide range of options based on their interests and capabilities, including work skills, study skills, finance and photography. As well as placements in local colleges and businesses, some students progress to undergraduate courses. All Key Stage 4 pupils and those who attend the sixth form have the opportunity to undertake the Duke of Edinburgh Award. They are very well prepared for their next stage of education and training.

- As a result of highly personalised programmes, the school sometimes operates an early-entry policy for GCSE examinations. However, this is for the most-able pupils who go on to achieve the highest grade. Some of the more able pupils sometimes attend a local mainstream school on a part-time basis. As a consequence, the most-able pupils also achieve outstandingly well from their starting points.

### **The quality of teaching is outstanding**

- Teaching is never less than good and is often outstanding in all subjects. All staff have an incisive understanding of what pupils are able to achieve and plan work which is pitched at just the right level of difficulty. They carefully ensure that every opportunity is used to make sure all pupils learn effectively, and foster positive attitudes and raise pupils' self-esteem.
- Teachers make it crystal clear what pupils are expected to know by the end of the lesson. They make learning fun. In a mathematics lesson, pupils delighted in telling adults that they had called out the wrong numbers when they were counting and ordering numbers to 20. They 'corrected' them, practising their skills and quickly developing accuracy in their counting skills. Pupils then accurately assessed their own progress against a skills checklist. Nevertheless, younger pupils do not have enough opportunities to check their own progress.
- Teachers are skilled in asking questions to deepen pupils' understanding and developing their communication skills and appreciation of their own and each other's work. For example, sixth-formers, when evaluating their photographs, identified key aspects of form, colour, and shape. Encouraged by the teacher, they then reflected on the striking images, expressing their responses and emotions powerfully.
- Whole-school training for the teaching of literacy has accelerated pupils' progress in reading and writing, including spelling. The timetable provides excellent opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in their lessons, particularly in the primary class. Pupils usually read accurately and for meaning. However, there are too few opportunities for younger pupils to investigate mathematics in practical ways and therefore to extend their understanding.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the quality of teaching. They know precisely when to support pupils, through effective questioning or paraphrasing the teachers' instructions and when to stand back and give pupils thinking time.
- All pupils receive good feedback in lessons as to how they are doing. Marking of the older pupils' work effectively provides them with good guidance on how to improve their work further. However, this is not routinely completed in the primary class.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently outstanding. Support is again individually tailored and highly focused on developing students' key skills as well as their success on courses. Staff work very closely with alternative providers, checking carefully on how students are doing so that support is highly relevant and motivating to students.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils usually have excellent attitudes to their learning. All staff are skilled in developing pupils' ability to work on their own. Occasionally, when pupils have difficulties managing their own actions, adults are highly competent in defusing potentially challenging behaviour.

- Pupils are motivated to meet the high expectations of staff. They continually strive to achieve what they are capable of and to meet their aspirational academic and personal targets. Students in the sixth form are excellent role models for the younger pupils; they are mature and responsible. Younger pupils look up to them and respect them.
- The school community is cohesive, warm and treats all pupils equally. This, together with exceptionally strong relationships, means that pupils feel safe, secure and happy. Pupils are respectful, polite and well-mannered. Pupils who join the school with low self-esteem quickly gain in confidence and start to believe in themselves.
- All pupils, including those with autism, are able to communicate and express themselves well. Those pupils who find it difficult to express themselves verbally are able to communicate with adults and pupils through sign language and gestures. They say that adults always listen to them and, as a result, they feel that their ideas are valued and respected.
- Attendance in 2013 was below average. This was partly the result of some pupils attending part-time initially. Nevertheless, the school can demonstrate significant improvements in all pupils' attendance rates, including those who previously refused to attend school or had very low attendance. More recently, attendance is average. The school has started to refuse holidays in term time and to raise parents' awareness of the importance of good attendance. There were no exclusions in 2013.
- Behavioural incidents have decreased substantially over the last three years. The behaviour team trains all staff to secure consistency in behaviour management. The team monitors and analyses all incidents, looking for patterns, and provides timely support for staff. Early interventions are sharply focused to avoid most sudden disruptive behaviour. The learning mentor provides very effective support and intervention for some of the most vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils are supervised very effectively at break times. Pupils enjoy taking their lunch with their friends where they share responsibilities for serving food. Older pupils, particularly the sixth-formers, help the younger pupils, often supporting them if they are experiencing difficulties.
- Pupils participate in a range of activities in the school, and in the local and wider community. The school council meets regularly and there are two representatives on the governing body. Further afield two students recently addressed members of the All Party Parliamentary Group in the House of Lords on the impact of a disability on young people.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. This includes arrangements made for students undertaking work experience or attending college to ensure that they are kept very safe when away from school.
- Pupils spoken to understood the nature of bullying and said it was not something they had experienced at school. They say that they feel extremely safe. Safeguarding is given the highest priority, including recent e-safety training for all staff, pupils and parents.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The principal is totally unrelenting in her drive to make sure all pupils achieve what they are capable of, in school and beyond. She has secured the commitment and enthusiasm of all staff, including a highly effective leadership team, who are equally ambitious for the school to continue to succeed. As a consequence, the school has been transformed rapidly since she was appointed.

- The principal leads by example. Her detailed and open approach to checking the effectiveness of the school has given senior leaders the confidence also to question, check and reflect upon the school's work in order to achieve even more. They use their expertise in education, therapy and care well to make sure that pupils' complex needs and abilities are met thoroughly.
- The leadership of the sixth form is also outstanding. The leader has high expectations and carefully makes sure that the available courses match the academic and personal needs of students, as well as ensuring students are equipped with the necessary work and life skills.
- The head of school provides effective support for middle leaders. They are highly motivated and innovative in their approach to school improvement. For example, the art, design and technology co-ordinator assesses and tracks pupils' progress digitally which means that pupils and parents are able to see how well they are doing visually, as well as having a detailed record of their next targets.
- Similarly, the new assessment co-ordinator uses his expertise in technology to collate pupil information to measure accurately how well pupils are doing against national benchmarks. This analysis shows that all pupils achieve and often exceed their challenging targets.
- The leadership of teaching is central to the school's work. Leaders check teaching regularly and use all available evidence to make accurate judgements. Teachers are set demanding targets for improvement. Leaders are highly supportive of staff and provide excellent training to ensure that teaching improves and that the best practice is shared. All staff are keen to take on new initiatives and to improve their practice further.
- The curriculum is designed so that all pupils are able to reach their potential, academically and personally. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' literacy skills, including communication, and this is highly effective. There is now a drive to ensure that pupils' mathematical skills are equally as strong. Students in the sixth form have a range of appropriate work experience placements linked to their course work.
- The provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Subjects are used well to enhance pupils' ability to think and reflect. A central tenet of the school is to celebrate what makes each individual different. This was observed in a Key Stage 3 class where pupils made their own 'culture boxes', collecting items that defined their own uniqueness.
- The school has only recently received the additional funding for primary school sports. Leaders plan to extend the yoga sessions that the older pupils receive to develop their co-ordination, balance and to strengthen pupils' concentration skills and mental well-being through relaxation.
- Partnership work is also highly effective with parents, other schools and colleges and placing authorities. The school also uses its own resources and expertise to support other schools, including mainstream special schools and local primary schools. In the words of the principal, 'We are now an outward looking school.' This prepares the students for the real world when they leave.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Changes to the governing body, following the appointment of several new governors, including the Chair of Governors, mean that leaders are now held to account for their work. The Chair meets regularly with the principal and asks questions about the effectiveness of the school. Furthermore, he has undertaken several monitoring visits to gather first-hand evidence for

example, reviewing the safeguarding and health and safety procedures. All statutory policies and procedures are met, including those for safeguarding.

- As a result of previous significant turbulence of the governing body, the performance management of the principal has been conducted by the deputy chief executive of the charity and an external education adviser. Targets are challenging and linked directly to the school's priorities. Governors are suitably informed about the quality of teaching and the link of performance to pay.
- Governors have a clear overview of the school's strengths and areas for development, including the quality of teaching. This is because the principal's reports to the governing body and the school's self evaluation and improvement plans are accurate and comprehensive. New governors have a good understanding of progress information and know exactly how well the school is performing compared to schools nationally.
- Governors are aware of those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and, despite not receiving the funding for the majority, they make sure that their needs are being met successfully and, as a result, they are making as much progress as all other groups.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122956
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	430724

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	78
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	33
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The National Charity 'I CAN'
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Armstrong
<b>Principal</b>	Angela Child
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 April 2011
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