

DAWN HOUSE SCHOOL – STAFF HANDBOOK	
DHS Local Offer 2024/25	
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From the parent carer's point of view:

1. How does the setting/school/college know if children/young people need extra help and what should I do if I think my child/young person may have special educational needs?

Speech and Language UK's Dawn House School in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire is a day and residential special school for children with severe speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and Asperger's Syndrome www.dawnhouseschool.org.uk.

The school provides intensive and specialist support for children and young people aged 5-19 years.

All pupils at Dawn House School have Education, Health and Care Plans that identify speech and language difficulties as their primary area of need.

The communication supportive environment at Dawn House means that pupils receive:

- full access to the national curriculum (pre-16) within small class groups
- the integrated education and therapy personalised to individual need to learn and develop independence
- an enriched curriculum that supports the transition to adulthood (post 16).

At Dawn House School, a team of specialist speech and language therapists works collaboratively with teaching and support staff to support pupils' language, communication and access to learning.

Other areas of need are identified through in-depth assessment and through other specialist staff working as part of the school team. Dawn House employs occupational therapists, learning mentors and a Mental Health Practitioner. We also work closely with CAMHS and targeted support teams from pupils' local areas and educational psychologists.

The 6th Form at Dawn House provides education and therapy for up to 30 young people in a separate study centre on the school campus. Students can go to the 6th Form department for one to three years and many young people then move successfully on to their local mainstream FE college, to higher education or to employment. All students access literacy, numeracy and life-skills work in the 6th Form department together with the specialist therapeutic support they need.

2. How will staff support my child?

Who will oversee and plan the education programme and who will be working with my child/young person and how often? What will be their roles? Who will explain this to me? How are the setting / school / college governors or trustees involved and what are their responsibilities? How does the setting / school / college know how effective its arrangements its provision for children and young people with special educational needs are?

In the primary department, each pupil has a core team of staff which includes teacher, speech and language therapist and learning support assistant.

Pupils **in the secondary department** are vertically grouped at key stage 3 and 4. Each tutor group in the secondary department has a core team consisting of a teacher, speech and language therapist and two learning support assistants. The core team is responsible for the pastoral care of the pupils.

The 6th Form provision based at Dawn House is enhanced through close partnerships with Vision West Notts College which is situated no more than 30 minutes away. We work with local employers and training providers to support learning and development. Students continue to benefit from tutors, teachers and therapists working closely together.

The Well-Being Lead for Families at Dawn House School provides a unique and valuable service to parents, making sure there are good links between home and school which enable parents and staff to work together to meet the needs of the pupils. The officer supports transition both into and out of Dawn House School.

Staff are also able to accompany parents on visits to schools, colleges and potential work settings, assisting them in identifying appropriate future provision and placements for their child.

Advice and guidance on a range of other issues, including managing behaviour and making leisure and social links within their home community are also offered.

Knowing that we are doing the best for our pupils is important to us at Dawn House. We do this in a range of ways:

- The school has regular Ofsted inspections, which over the last 3 inspections has rated the school as Outstanding.
- In addition to this we carry out our own monitoring which ensures our school, teaching, learning, therapy and residential care are all of a high quality.
- Our residential provision also has annual Ofsted inspections which show our high quality provision extends beyond the school day.
- Every year we look at and analyse the results of assessments and external exams – this means we can be sure that we target support where it is needed. We are very proud of the successes of our pupils.
- The therapy team at Dawn House also regularly assesses pupils, and looks at how much progress pupils make so that we know what we are doing works.

3. How will the curriculum be matched to my child's/young person's needs?

What are the setting's / school's / college's approaches to differentiation? How will that help my child/young person?

We believe that what is taught in school should make sense to pupils, is relevant, engaging and interesting and enables them to make good progress through effective differentiation according to need.

The primary curriculum is effectively differentiated to ensure access and progression for all pupils. Teachers and therapists work together to identify the specific language concepts and vocabulary needed for a topic.

Lessons are very practical, using highly visual approaches. Staff use learning from experience, signing, pictures and symbols to support all language. Academic, personal and social skills are developed to improve each child's confidence, independence and self-esteem as a learner.

In the secondary department all subjects including English, Maths, Science and Computing are delivered by subject specialists with students grouped according to social as well as learning needs.

At key stage 3 there are 3 vertically grouped classes again grouped according to social as well as learning needs.

At key stage 4 students are grouped according to learning needs in English and Maths through the blocking of the timetable across key stage 4 and 6th Form.

In 6th Form department, students are accessing all of their learning through their vocational or academic course of study in addition to therapy which continues to be an integral part of the provision.

4. How will I know how my child is doing?

In addition to the normal reporting arrangements what opportunities will there be for me to discuss his or her progress with the staff? How does the setting / school / college know how well my child/young person is doing? How will I know what progress my child/young person should be making? What opportunities will there be for regular contact about things that have happened at early years setting / school / college eg a home / school book? How will you explain to me how his or her learning is planned and how I can help support this outside of the setting / school / college? How and when will I be involved in planning my child's/young person's education? Do you offer any parent training or learning events?

The school has its own Well-Being Lead for Families. He visits all families before the pupil is admitted to the school and is the key link between home and school. On entry to the school the pupil is supported by one of our learning mentors who maintains close contact with the family during the initial weeks.

Of course, as well as this, staff teams are regularly in contact with families through home/school email communication, use of the school mobile application Weduc and telephone to ensure that there is carry over from school to home – but also to ensure that any successes or problems are shared as soon as possible.

Staff monitor pupil progress closely and regularly compare students' progress and attainment with information available from the DfE. Over the last three years progress at Dawn House has been outstanding across all key stages compared to similar settings.

Homework for pupils at Dawn House is not compulsory but can be planned with the pupils and parents if needed – staff will give guidance about how you can help your child.

The school has an annual parent's day on a Saturday, so most families can attend. There are a series of workshops for parents in the morning and lunch is available at a small cost. During the afternoon, there is an opportunity to meet with tutors and core teams to discuss progress. Parents are welcome to come into school at other times – to talk with staff or to join in with planned activities. There is a parents/staff group which we call 'Friends of Dawn House', who manage the organisation of many school events and fundraising activities.

5. What support will there be for my child's/young person's overall wellbeing?

What is the pastoral, medical and social support available in the setting / school / college for children with SEND? How does the setting / school / college manage the administration of medicines and providing personal care? What support is there for behaviour, avoiding exclusions and increasing attendance? How will my child / young person be able to contribute his or her views? How will the setting / school / college support my child / young person to do this?

The core team of **teacher, teaching assistants and therapist** is responsible for pastoral care of pupils. They work closely with the residential staff and parents to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is always high priority. Our school nursing auxiliary is responsible for administering all prescribed medication. Health and medical care plans are drawn up in consultation with parents.

Many of our pupils have emotional or social needs and all of our staff are trained in supporting or managing behaviour in school. Staff have specialist understanding of pupils' strengths and difficulties and this means that many behaviour incidents are avoided. For pupils who need focussed support for emotional difficulties our **learning mentors, Mental Health Practitioner** and behaviour support group plans personalised programmes working closely with core teams. Families and staff can also draw on the support of our **Well-Being Team**. We pride ourselves on our flexibility in meeting pupils' needs through personalised programmes through which students thrive. Exclusions are rare.

Pupils are encouraged to play an active part in the school community with opportunities ranging from elections to the pupil leadership group to representing students on the School Advisor Board. Pupils' views are sought on a regular basis. Staff are skilled at using imaginative ways of capturing pupils' honest opinions!

6. What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by the school?

Are there specialist staff working at the setting / school / college and what are their qualifications? What other services does the setting / school / college access including health, therapy and social care services?

All teaching and therapy staff are specialists, coming to us with a range of professional qualifications and experience. We strongly believe in staff building on this and so we have a vibrant programme of training to develop specialist knowledge. All staff have an in-depth understanding of pupils' needs, and we regularly explore new ways of supporting them.

Where we need additional specialist knowledge we work closely with local colleagues – but will also look at whether we can support a member staff to train and develop their own knowledge, e.g. on the staff team we have staff qualified in the following areas: OT and one



SLT have additional training and qualifications in Sensory Integration, a member of the Well Being Team has recently attended training to deliver Mental Health First Aid training to staff, one SLT is also a Makaton Tutor other staff, Certificate in Asperger's Syndrome, Dyslexia screening qualification, Dysphagia qualification, ASD and Understanding Mental Health.

All staff at Dawn House, from teachers to office administrators to domestic staff have a knowledge of pupils' speech, language and communication needs. All staff participate in the regular training events we have including regular safeguarding updates.

7. How will my child/young person be included in activities outside the classroom including school trips?

Will he or she be able to access all of the activities of the setting / school / college and how will you assist him or her to do so? How do you involve parent carers in planning activities and trips?

Dawn House is an inclusive community and all pupils are included in the range of activities planned by the school. On entry to the school a personalised risk assessment is written in consultation with parents which identifies the support needed by each individual. This information is used when planning all off-site visits.

8. How accessible is the setting / school / college environment?

Is the building fully wheelchair accessible? Have there been improvements in the auditory and visual environment? Are there disabled changing and toilet facilities? How does the setting /school / college communicate with parent carers whose first language is not English? How will equipment and facilities to support children and young people with special educational needs be secured?

Dawn House is wheelchair accessible throughout and all facilities can be accessed by pupils with a range of needs. The environment is communication friendly and as such has information available for all levels of literacy. This includes information available to parents, some of whom have English as a second language.

9. How will the school prepare and support my child to join the setting /school / college, transfer to a new setting / school / college or the next stage of education and life?

What preparation will there be for both the setting / school / college and my child/young person before he or she joins the setting / school / college. How will he or she be prepared to move onto the next stage? What information will be provided to his or her new setting / school / college? How will you support a new setting / school / college to prepare for my child/young person?

Our transition arrangements for pupils are excellent. Following an initial assessment, in collaboration with placing local authorities, the school can make individualised plans for pupils starting at Dawn House. For some pupils, there may need to be special arrangements, e.g. starting with a part-time timetable, or arriving just after other pupils, or spending some time with a learning mentor or a teaching assistant at the beginning of each day.

In the 6th Form department the needs and aspirations of students are identified and inform personalised programmes to ensure students are supported to realise their ambitions. Well Being Lead for families plays a pivotal role in supporting transition out of Dawn House School.

Identified staff will accompany parents on visits to schools, colleges and potential work settings, assisting them in identifying appropriate future provision and placements for their child.

10. How are the school's resources allocated and matched to children's/young people's special educational needs?

How is the setting's / school's / college's special educational needs budget allocated?

All pupils at Dawn House School have an Education Health and Care Plan. This outlines the type and level of support pupils need; the school makes sure that this is in place – but also regularly checks that it is effective and reviews the document at annual Person Centred Reviews.

11. How is the decision made about what type and how much support my child will receive?

Describe the decision making process. Who will make the decision and on what basis? Who else will be involved? How will I be involved? How does the setting / school / college judge whether the support has had an impact?

All children at Dawn House School receive specialist, integrated support for their education and communication needs. This means that if a pupil needs additional or different support this can be identified and planned for. Parents, and if appropriate pupils, are involved in this process.

We are most concerned about whether any support is having an impact and so regularly review progress so that any changes can be made as quickly as possible. To judge this, we use formative and summative assessments:

- Education and language assessments and checklists
- Feedback from staff
- Feedback from pupils and parents

12. How will parents be involved in discussions about and planning for my child's education?

Describe the setting's / school's / college's approach to involving parents in decision making and day to day school life including for their own child or young person.

In addition to close consultation with parents before and on entry to the school, there are monthly coffee afternoons for parents, the annual Pupil Participation Conference where parents join with staff to take part in training, parents' consultation day, annual reviews and more social occasions such as the Christmas performance and sports day. All parents are invited to join the Friends of Dawn House who organise regular fundraising events such as fashion shows and car boot sales and parents are also members of the school governing body.

13. How will you help me support my child's learning?

See previous.

14. What training have staff supporting children and young people with SEND had, or are having?

See previous.

15. What our Parents and pupils say about the school:

How satisfied are you with your child's placement?

- "I am delighted with the placement, it's all I wanted and more. My son is very happy in his school and looks forward to going every day. He is making steady progress with most subjects although he is never going to be very academic! I am impressed with the vocational sessions he has had, especially that he was given a choice. His speech, language and social skills have improved and I was told he would always 'Front' his sounds but now he is able to sound his 'g' and 'K', he has proved past specialists wrong. This has to be down to the intensive and integrated SALT within lessons and one to ones. The school have also taken a lead role in tackling his psychological resistance to food and, as part of a multi-agency approach, increased his intake and thus his long term health."
- "Everything brilliant- fantastic doing really well, school inform me about everything"
- "Very satisfied, excellent communications, really, really pleased- more communication in 4 weeks than 4 years in previous school"
- "Whilst I know I will be extremely sad to say goodbye to this period in Jay's life, there is a small part of me that can sense he is ready for this transition, it is the right time. To leave sooner would have been too soon and in fact now I reflect on it, any longer would be too long. What a testament to this one-of-a-kind school"

How satisfied does your child say they are with their school placement?

- "I asked him if he liked school and he said a resounding yes. He said he liked the work (which surprised me!) and that particularly he liked PE, Maths and Music, Science and ICT. He also said he liked his friends (he has a strong relationship with some of his peer group) and the food. He said it made him happy that he could talk better now and more people understood what he was saying".
- "Loves it, looks forward –eager to go"
- "I am so, so, very happy at how T has settled at Dawn House. I felt the transition took a very long time, but I do understand the reasons why. My child is a totally different person since starting this school. I cannot believe the change in him. T's confidence has grown so much. I really am so grateful for the staff that have worked with T. The difference in a year is unbelievable to how T first started. He is now doing three after school clubs, this is amazing to say that T didn't leave the house for 21 months before starting. I would like to see T become more prepared for adulthood, travel training would be good to try. To help support T moving forward and some type of work experience would be good to try. The staff team at Dawn house are a true credit to the school and I believe that this is why T has flourished so much."

16. Who can I contact for further information?

Dawn House has its own website www.dawnhouseschool.org.uk. There is lots of information here about the school, the curriculum and what we achieve.

We welcome visits from parents. If you'd like to hear more about Dawn House School and discuss whether or not Dawn House School could be right for your child, please do get in touch.