

Inspection of Esland Daven School

Unit 2, Dane Valley Mill, Havannah Street, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 2AH

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 January 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This school offers an educational lifeline to pupils who have been without access to learning for a considerable amount of time. Pupils and sixth-form students who attend Esland Daven School have often faced significant challenges in their lives prior to joining the school. Many have had adverse childhood experiences. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Regardless of their previous difficulties, pupils are welcomed into a safe and caring environment. Education staff work closely with clinical professionals to ensure that pupils receive the therapeutic support they need. Pupils quickly build trusting relationships with their key adults. Over time, pupils come to enjoy attending school and gradually increase the time that they spend there. Many pupils are well on the way to re-engaging with their education successfully.

Pupils told inspectors how the school has helped them to improve their behaviour. Parents and carers echo this view. Staff are quick to recognise when pupils are distressed. They provide expert support, which helps pupils to manage their emotions.

The school is determined to prepare pupils well for their future. Typically, the progress that they make in their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) learning sets them up well for adulthood. However, the school's ambition for pupils' achievement in other subjects is not fully realised. Pupils' learning across the curriculum is uneven.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has set out an ambitious curriculum that combines academic, vocational, social and emotional learning. This curriculum is carefully shaped around the needs of each pupil and student. Leaders and staff recognise that pupils at this school need a different approach to that found in a mainstream school.

Pupils build up their study gradually. The school has a realistic ambition for the length of time that this may take. The attendance of most pupils to school, although low to begin with, increases in line with this ambition. However, at present, this means that most pupils do not study a broad range of subjects.

In some areas of the curriculum, in particular PSHE and the social and emotional curriculum, the intended learning has been carefully identified. Expert staff deliver these aspects of the curriculum. Over time, this helps pupils to be ready for learning in their other subjects.

In academic subjects such as English and mathematics, pupils' learning is inconsistent. Most staff are not specialists in these subjects. They do not have sufficient subject knowledge to ensure that pupils learn what they need to. Despite a well-designed curriculum, learning activities are sometimes poorly thought out.

This does not help pupils to build their knowledge securely. Furthermore, assessment strategies are not aligned to the intended curriculum. This makes it difficult for staff to check whether pupils have learned what they should. This means that pupils' learning in these subjects is not as secure as it could be.

Students in the sixth form typically fare better. They follow a curriculum designed to compensate for their missed key stage 4 education. In the main, the curriculum in the sixth form is delivered by staff with greater subject expertise. Most sixth-form students are successfully gaining qualifications that will help them to move on to appropriate next steps in their education.

The school assesses and identifies the needs of pupils thoroughly. There is a comprehensive approach to joining up information between school and external agencies. Staff use this information well to adapt their delivery of the curriculum.

The school's approach to reading is in the early stages of development. When they join the school, many pupils read fluently. However, the school's work to identify and support pupils who are not reading as well as they should has only just begun. Some pupils who struggle to read do not get the help that they need to catch up to their peers.

Pupils' personal development is a priority at this school. There is a strong focus on developing independence and preparation for adulthood. Pupils learn about substance misuse, healthy relationships and consent in an age-appropriate way. Staff also help pupils to engage positively with each other in a range of informal settings. For example, pupils learn to follow the rules of a game when they play table tennis together. Students in the sixth form take appropriate steps towards adult life. For example, staff help them to apply for a driving licence and study for their driving theory test. Added to this, the individual careers programmes that students follow help them to develop appropriate aspirations for their futures.

The proprietor has appointed leaders with the expertise necessary to ensure that all of the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently. However, the school's systems for monitoring the curriculum rely too heavily on staff's knowledge of individual pupils. These systems have not kept pace as the number of pupils has increased. This prevents the school from having a clear overview of the quality of education that it provides and hinders further improvements.

Policies, including a safeguarding policy that meets current statutory requirements, are made available to parents on the school's website. Staff follow these policies. They take a consistent approach to caring for pupils. The proprietor acts swiftly to ensure that decisions related to welfare, health and safety are taken in the best interests of pupils. A strong governing body provides the school with appropriate support and challenge. The school therefore has clear capacity to improve.

The proprietor body has ensured that the school meets the requirements of paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. It has a suitable plan to improve the accessibility of the school premises for people with disabilities.

Staff are well supported by the proprietor body. They value the access that they have to professional supervision. Staff told inspectors that leaders listen to their views and ensure that their workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, staff lack the subject knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum as effectively as the school intends. This hinders how well some pupils learn these subjects. The school should ensure that staff receive the training and support that they need to deliver the curriculum well.
- The school's assessment strategies do not give staff enough understanding of how well pupils are learning the curriculum. At times, pupils do not have the knowledge that they need for subsequent learning. The school should ensure that assessment strategies are well matched to the knowledge set out in the curriculum so that staff can accurately identify, and then address, any learning that pupils have missed.
- Some pupils who struggle with reading do not receive the support that they need to catch up. This hinders their learning in other areas of the curriculum. The school should ensure that the recently introduced reading interventions are used to help pupils to catch up with their reading quickly.
- Some of the school's systems do not help leaders to evaluate the impact of their actions. At times, they are unaware that the curriculum is not being delivered as intended. This does not give the proprietor sufficient clarity about the quality of education at the school. The school should ensure that the curriculum it delivers is monitored and evaluated carefully to ensure that it has the intended positive impact.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	149448
DfE registration number	895/6025
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10299272
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	5
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Esland North Ltd
Chair	Jill Palmer
Headteacher	Kelly Pope
Annual fees (day pupils)	£61,724
Telephone number	01260 294909
Website	www.eslandcare.co.uk/our-schools/esland-daven-school
Email address	davenschool@eslandcare.co.uk

Information about this school

- This is the school's first standard inspection. The school was registered by the Department for Education (DfE) on 9 February 2023.
- The school operates from premises at Unit 2, Dane Valley Mill, Havannah Street, Congleton CW12 2AH. The proprietor previously operated a different school from the same premises. That school, known as Esland Congleton School, closed in April 2022.
- The number of pupils on roll at this school has grown considerably since it opened in March 2023. The school is registered for up to 35 pupils.
- There has been a change of headteacher since the school opened.
- Almost all pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorder.
- Pupils joining the school typically have a planned transition into education. This means that they gradually build up their attendance over an appropriate period of time. The school's ambition is for all pupils to work towards attending full time.
- The school makes use of one registered and three unregistered alternative providers for pupils. The school also provides some of its education in the residential care settings that are operated by the same proprietor.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the proprietor body, including the chair, and with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of two local authorities who are responsible for commissioning places at the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including that relating to the standards and the curriculum.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the checks that had been carried out on staff to ensure their suitability; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff or pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at social times, in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and PSHE. They met leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. They also considered the curriculum across some other subject areas and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school premises.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the DfE to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: the school is unlikely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.
- There is insufficient space in the school for the proposed number of pupils to receive full-time education on the premises. In particular, the limited outdoor space would not allow any additional pupils to play outside or to receive suitable physical education.
- Many pupils require individual or very small group supervision for their safety and level of need. Current staffing levels would make this difficult to achieve for the proposed additional number of pupils.
- The limited subject expertise means that it is unlikely that the proposed additional number of pupils would be able to study a full curriculum.
- The school's systems for monitoring the quality of education are unlikely to sufficiently ensure that all of the proposed number of pupils make good progress.

The school is unlikely to meet the following standards

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the

matters specified in sub-paragraph (2), is drawn up and implemented effectively.

- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
- 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.
- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 23(1) (c) suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education.
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 29(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable outdoor space is provided in order to enable–
 - 29(1)(a) physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and
 - 29(1)(b) pupils to play outside.
- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1) (c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Information about the material change inspection

- Inspectors considered the school's proposal to increase the number of pupils on roll as part of the standard inspection.

Inspection team

Ben Hill, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kevin Sexton

Ofsted Inspector

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