Local Offer
Sunfield
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What is Sunfield?

Sunfield Independent Specialist School and Children’s Home is a charity with over 90 years’ experience in supporting children and young people with severe and complex learning and behavioural needs. Sunfield is part of Ruskin Mill Trust, which operates a number of provisions (schools, colleges, children’s homes and supported accommodation) in England, Wales and Scotland.

We offer 38 and 52-week residential and day places to children with complex and profound special needs and challenging behaviour, as well as respite provision for young people attending the school. Sunfield does not take emergency placements but we can offer swift, well-planned admissions to match an appropriate vacancy.

Our residential cottages, school and working farm are all located on a single site in the village of Clent in the West Midlands.

Who does Sunfield provide for?

Sunfield can meet the needs of children and young people with severe and complex learning needs that include:

- autistic spectrum conditions (ASC)
- Attachment
- epilepsy
- developmental delay
- moderate to severe learning difficulties
- social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)
- moderate to severe visual and/or hearing impairment
- mobility and motor difficulties
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

All our children and young people require and are provided with high levels of support and care in the day and home provisions. However, every child is unique. We will always assess every child individually and admission is dependent on meeting our eligibility criteria, laid out in our admissions policy.

Sunfield offers places to children and young people between the ages of 6-19.
What is Sunfield's approach to supporting children and young people?

Our multi-disciplinary teams in education, care, psychology and therapies work closely with children and their families both on-site and at home. By getting to know each child and young person, we tailor our care and education to their needs. We make a difference, especially in cases where a child has been unable to thrive elsewhere.

Sunfield follows Ruskin Mill Trust’s Practical Skills Therapeutic Education (PSTE) approach inspired by Rudolf Steiner’s insights into human development in both the home and school provisions. Through PSTE, our young people are supported to flourish and grow through a programme of holistic care, practical activities such as gardening and crafts, healthy nutrition, and an integrated care, education, and therapy programme. Through PSTE the young people experience a broad and balanced curriculum that extends across the education and care provisions and includes literacy, numeracy and IT, as well as independent living skills, relationships, confidence, resilience and self-care. The focus is on developing the young person’s sense of their own potential, and to become as independent as their aspirations and abilities allow.

The key to the implementation of this approach is consistent communication and joined up working between our care, education and therapy teams, as well as the families and support networks of our children and young people. We seek to generate trust and confidence through developing meaningful, honest and open relationships between children, young people, families and ourselves.

Each child or young person at Sunfield has an individualised programme of learning, support and leisure activities that is oriented towards their particular needs and skills. We are able to measure our young people’s progress through a number of assessment methods to ensure that our provision is consistently meeting needs and that our young people are thriving. Families are supported to contribute as much as possible to this programme through regular communication, review meetings and their relationships with staff and leaders.

How are decisions made about who can attend Sunfield?

As part of our assessment process, Sunfield will send a multi-disciplinary team of professionals to meet the child and assess their needs in their current environment. This may be at home, school, a short breaks provision or a residential setting. If the child is not currently in education, we will consider a home visit, or for the child and their family to visit Sunfield as part of the assessment.

Based on their detailed observations, as well as consideration of the needs identified in the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the admissions team will establish whether Sunfield can meet the child’s needs and how to do that, including the required staffing support. The decision on the offer to place the child at Sunfield will be shared with the local authority/private funder, including the cost of placement.

Careful consideration is given to placing each new young person in a peer group that is compatible for all children within that group, and one that offers the best opportunities for the children and young people to live and learn alongside one another.
How does Sunfield ensure that my child will be compatible with their house/classmates?

Every child’s needs are carefully considered when they are referred to Sunfield. Our observational and clinical assessments allow us to look at their needs of your child and their compatibility with the existing cohort they would be joining. Both an impact risk assessment and a group risk assessment are completed in order to ensure the home/class identified is suitable and the potential risks mitigated.

Prospective class groups are identified by the child or young person’s developmental level as opposed to age, and take into account factors such as the communication, sensory, relationship and behavioural needs of the group.

We also reflect on how the needs of the group may affect your child’s introduction and placement. This allows us to make adjustments and plans to accommodate any specific needs that may arise. Identifying a compatible group where your child can be safe, and live and learn happily is our top priority.

What facilities will be available to my child?

Sunfield has a variety of residential cottages and extensive educational facilities that are located in 58 acres of parkland, nestled on the slopes of the Clent Hills. The grounds include a working farm (in which children are encouraged and supported to work) with horticultural areas and natural trails for exploration and adventure, as well as play areas with trampolines, and outdoor sensory areas with calm spaces. All are designed for children to engage, relax, exercise, have fun and develop life-long learning and independent living skills, safely and securely.

We have numerous spacious classrooms that our children and young people furnish with their craft and artistic work; we have other independent spaces for young people who need more individualised education programmes. Sunfield also has a range of specialist rooms for cookery, arts, games, pottery, felting, dedicated craft rooms and administration, along with a farm classroom, a large theatre, lecture room and meeting rooms. The children and young people have access to a range of technology to support their communication and learning, for example iPads and other Alternative and Augmentative Communication aids.

Sunfield has a host of dedicated on-site therapy facilities including a soft playroom, colour light therapy room, a state of the art Sensory Integration Suite and a multi-sensory room which enable children to benefit from regular meaningful therapy sessions to support their independent living and learning. The children and young people can also use instruments, devices and equipment to support therapies such as music, speech and language, and occupational therapy.

In addition to our on-site facilities, we have a fleet of vehicles that enable young people to access appropriate community-based leisure facilities such as shopping, cinema, bowling and swimming. Some young people also attend community-based clubs and events on a regular basis.

We celebrate our own Sunfield community through regular festivals that are linked to the changing of the seasons and progress of the year. These festivals give our children a sense of contributing to and participating in our community, and experiencing themselves in the flow of time, as well as simply having fun and being together.
Residential provision

At Sunfield Children’s Home, we believe that it is vital that all children benefit from a nurturing, therapeutic environment that provides the opportunity for a holistic lifestyle. This incorporates health, education, and new experiences in a home setting in which disability does not define a person.

The residential provision works holistically with therapy and education to underpin the journey of every child or young person by moulding with their surroundings to create a unique, personal environment. To nurture this approach, staff embed our comprehensive training into their daily practice, further supporting our shared vision of human development. Sunfield’s residential programme is delivered through holistic support and care, ensuring that each child or young person’s nutrition and diet, health and wellbeing, and development of relationships are woven into all aspects of the homes and our land. To do this we work with specific care qualities which have been developed and researched by Ruskin Mill Trust.

All Staff are trained in nutrition and within the homes, the staff with contributions from the children and young people prepare menus that are healthy and balanced, based on fresh organic and biodynamic produce regularly sourced from our on-site biodynamic garden and farm. The children and young people plan and prepare their menus with staff. They engage in wellness activities, and are supported to develop individualised activity and social plans, ensuring they are healthy and nourished physically, socially and spiritually.

Due to the often complex nature of their disabilities, we know that it is not possible to treat our pupils’ symptoms in isolation. Instead, we approach each individual as a whole person. The result is that our residents are able to lead rewarding lives both in their homes and in the surrounding community. We work closely with parents, carers, support staff in both the homes and education, and the individual’s extended support network to ensure that every member of the child or young person’s community is included in the decision making process centered on their holistic development.

Household planning is key to supporting each individual’s safety and development. At Sunfield, our entire team assesses the needs of each child or young person in order to ensure that their home and housemates are compatible with their specific requirements. We have a variety of individualised homes, all on site and situated within our farm, garden, and woodlands.

The result of Sunfield’s holistic support and care programme is that our children and young people consistently achieve good outcomes on their pathways to supported independence. They lead rich and full lives through our integrated planning and a warm, caring environment.

How will my child’s learning be matched to their needs?

Learning is continuously promoted through full-time attendance at school and through our integrated waking day curriculum. Staff in education, care, psychology and therapies work in close liaison, using a multi-disciplinary model, to ensure that teaching and learning approaches are closely matched to each student’s individual learning needs. There is regular monitoring and assessment, and fine-tuning where necessary. Each individual’s bespoke curriculum and highly trained team of staff allows us to provide a tailored approach to every child’s learning that is geared to their individual learning level.

Communication passports, written by our speech and language therapists, are in place for children and young people who require them to facilitate their communication across all settings. The termly
targets in each child or young person’s Individual Learning Plan challenge each child and young person to achieve their full potential across the day and residential curriculum – whether it be in a lesson at school, preparing a meal in their home setting, or enjoying an activity in the community.

Your child will benefit from small class groups based on their age, ability, communication and sensory profile. They will undertake a personalised learning programme, supported by expert teams who work together to meet the diverse needs of all young people. They will also be able to access innovative and effective creative arts and work-related learning, where appropriate. Our post-16 curriculums will enable each young person to learn, practice and refine the skills, knowledge and understanding they will need for their adult lives. They also have the opportunity to experience taster sessions at our local Ruskin Mill Trust colleges to help identify directions for their future.

After the age of 14, all our children and young people have a transition plan that links the skills they develop to the next step of their journey, whether in work, education or supported living.

**What specialist services will be available to my child?**

Working with our expert education and care teams, our psychology and therapies team offers a holistic range of therapies to support development across all aspects of a child’s life. As they are on-site services, they provide a responsive and flexible approach to your child's changing needs, and are able to offer timely support, advice and intervention. These therapies include:

- speech and language therapy
- occupational therapy
- music therapy
- light and colour therapy
- eurythmy
- rhythmical massage
- therapeutic art

Sunfield works with a range of health care professionals including psychiatrists, GPs, specialist dentists, opticians, local CAMHS, the continence nurse, our Trust nurse and Trust GP. They will liaise closely with you and the key professionals supporting your child’s health, and will train and advise staff in accordance with your child’s agreed health support plan. The wealth of knowledge and experience of our professional experts here at Sunfield will enable your child’s needs to be understood and met by a qualified and experienced team.

**How will Sunfield support my child’s wellbeing?**

In our experience, happy and secure children and young people are more able to learn and thrive. Our priority will be to support their wellbeing and emotional needs so they can more confidently and effectively access their living and learning experiences.

If your child needs additional intervention, our teams in psychology and therapies are on-hand and on-site to better assess, advise and further support their emotional wellbeing and needs.

Sunfield has an excellent track record of helping children and young people to transform their potential within their life by engaging effectively with their living and learning experiences. The resulting increase in skills, confidence and ability to communicate empowers them to make very real progress in their life.
What training do the staff supporting my child have?

Sunfield has a rigorous selection process, aimed at securing only the highest quality team members from the outset. Once selected, all new staff undertake an induction programme of mandatory training, i.e. safeguarding, working with autism, attachment, communication training, QCF Level 4 in Children’s Residential Care, CALM de-escalation training, and Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. Staff also receive training in the Ruskin Mill Trust’s Seven Fields of Practice. This training ensures the staff have the required skills and knowledge, competence and confidence to undertake their role.

This is followed by our additional and ongoing programme of mandatory and bespoke training. These courses enhance role-specific skills, and support the wider career development of our staff. Sunfield teams continually share their own expert knowledge, experience and understanding of each child with each other, to provide the highest quality bespoke care and education. Sunfield is currently developing a bespoke training provision dedicated to developing the art and skills of the Homemaker framed within our Holistic support and Care training.

How are families involved at Sunfield?

We see parents, carers and extended family as integral to a child’s journey through Sunfield. We will liaise with families on all aspects of their child’s life here. We have an open-door policy, so families are welcome to request a visit at any time, and we will provide support as needed to ensure there are safe, quality times for all.

As part of a child’s Individual Learning Plan (ILP), individual targets will be determined at the beginning of each term by our team and after informed consultation with families. Progress against these targets is reviewed regularly. Teachers also keep in touch with families/careers by telephone throughout the term, and a report is sent to parents at the end of each term. In addition, a report on the progress of the child will be written for the annual review of their EHCP, when amendments can be made. Home managers send weekly and monthly reports to families and are always available to talk on the phone.

Sunfield sends out a monthly newsletter to include families in the events and celebrations at the school and children’s home. We also regularly send updates on our self-assessment and quality improvement programme, ensuring that families are aware of our plans for further development.

Sunfield is dedicated and committed to supporting the whole family and see quality family visits as a key component of a child’s and family’s wellbeing. We have two on-site family centres which are self-contained flats, available to families to come for overnight or weekend stays.

How will Sunfield prepare my child for the transition to the next stage of their life?

From the day they join, Sunfield prepares all young people for transition by developing their independent living skills and identifying strategies to support their communication, learning, behavioural and sensory needs. This will contribute to the next stage in their life.

In Year 9, Sunfield will begin to plan for the transition into adult services, working alongside families,
the child and representatives from the local authority. Our staff are experienced in this process and will advise and support throughout the transition planning period to ensure the most appropriate future placement is identified.

As Sunfield is part of Ruskin Mill Trust there are many opportunities to transition into one of the many colleges that RMT has around the country including:

- Glasshouse and Argent College (West Midlands)
- Ruskin Mill College (Gloucestershire)
- Plas Dwbl College (South Wales)
- Freeman College (Sheffield)
- Clervaux Trust and Clervaux Life (Darlington)

The Trust is also introducing post-education residential provisions for those young people where formal education is no longer suitable. Known as the Rise programme, placements are funded through social care with the aim of further encouraging a young person’s life skills and promoting participation in the community. One of the homes in Sunfield’s grounds is registered to deliver this programme for former Sunfield young people and is managed by the residential team from Glasshouse College.

**How do I take the next step?**

At Sunfield, our aim is to inform, support and reassure you, your child and your family from the moment you get in touch with us. We will help you make the right choice.

If you would like more information, or you are considering Sunfield for your child, please contact our admissions manager on 01562 881320 or referrals@sunfield.org.uk.

You can get in touch to arrange an initial visit, or simply to discuss what Sunfield can offer. We take admissions throughout the year, so please feel free to contact us at any time.

**We look forward to hearing from you!**