Annual Outcomes Report

School: Cambian Dunbroch School

Academic Year: 25/26

Headteacher: Karen Carrington

Number on Roll: 4

Number of Leavers: 13

Headteacher Summary

School Context

During the 2025-26 academic year, Dunbroch School supported a cohort of up to 13 students, all of whom presented with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs alongside significant experiences of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). Many students also had additional neurodiverse profiles, including diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and, in some cases, mild learning difficulties.

Students arrived with complex social, emotional and educational needs, often characterised by prolonged periods of disrupted education, significant attendance difficulties and deeply entrenched negative perceptions of themselves as learners. Many had developed low self-esteem, limited confidence in their own abilities and a sense of disillusionment towards education as a result of previous experiences. These factors created substantial barriers to attendance, engagement, emotional regulation and academic progress.

Recognising that successful learning can only occur when students feel emotionally safe and understood, the school's primary focus was on rebuilding trust, increasing engagement and creating an environment where students could experience success. Through a highly personalised and trauma-informed approach, staff worked to reduce anxiety, strengthen relationships and re-establish positive educational experiences.

This was achieved through a range of therapeutic and graduated interventions, including phased reintegration programmes, short- and long-term EBSA support plans, personalised timetables and intensive relational practice. Enrichment subjects such as Art, Physical Education, Food Technology and Forest School were used strategically to develop trusting relationships between students and staff, whilst also creating accessible routes back into learning. These sessions provided opportunities to discreetly embed key academic skills, enabling students to engage in English, Mathematics and Science through practical, meaningful and low-pressure activities.

As a result, students were able to access education at a pace appropriate to their individual needs, reduce anxiety associated with formal learning environments and gradually rebuild confidence in their ability to achieve. This foundation of psychological safety and engagement has supported students to make meaningful progress academically, socially and emotionally throughout the academic year.

Outcomes at a Glance

Academic Achievement

Measure	Outcome
GCSE Qualifications Achieved	0
Functional Skills Qualifications Achieved	0
Vocational Qualifications Achieved	0
Unit Awards Achieved	0
Accreditation Success Rate	0
Pupils Meeting or Exceeding Expected Progress	0

Key Academic Highlights

- Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) contracts were introduced and embedded across the school, providing a structured, personalised approach to supporting students experiencing significant anxiety around education. These plans enabled students to gradually rebuild trust in school, take ownership of their attendance goals and engage in education at a pace appropriate to their individual needs. As a result, students demonstrated increased engagement, improved attendance and greater confidence in accessing learning.
- Forest School became a timetabled provision for all age groups, providing regular opportunities for experiential learning, emotional regulation and personal development. The therapeutic nature of Forest School supported students in developing resilience, teamwork, problem-solving skills and positive relationships with both peers and staff. It also provided an alternative route into learning for students who found traditional classroom environments challenging.

- A number of students were entered for Functional Skills qualifications ranging from Entry Level to Level 1. Although several students moved from their care placements before examinations could be completed, the preparation for these qualifications provided valuable opportunities to develop confidence, build examination readiness and strengthen literacy and numeracy skills.
- The school broadened its curriculum offer through the expertise of staff, enabling students to access a range of specialist subjects not typically available in many small provisions. Alongside core subjects such as English, Mathematics and Science, students benefitted from subjects including Architecture and British Sign Language (BSL). This enriched curriculum promoted engagement, aspiration and exposure to a wider range of career pathways and interests.
- Students have begun working towards an increasingly ambitious range of qualifications, including Entry Level Functional Skills, Level 1 and Level 2 Functional Skills, Entry Level Science, GCSE English, Mathematics and Science, alongside vocational qualifications in Health and Social Care and Childcare. This demonstrates the school's commitment to providing meaningful progression routes and maintaining high aspirations for all learners regardless of starting point.

Subject Area	Qualification	Level	Number Achieved	Highest Grade
English language	A-level, GCSE, Functional Skills		0	
English Literature	A-level, GCSE, Functional Skills		0	
Mathematics	A-level, GCSE, Functional Skills		0	
Science	A-level, GCSE, Functional Skills		0	
French	GCSE		0	
RE	GCSE		0	
History	GCSE		0	

Geography	GCSE		0	
ICT / Digital Skills	GCSE		0	
Art & Design	A-level, GCSE, Functional Skills		0	
Sport & PE	GCSE		0	
Food Tech	GCSE and Btec		0	
Health and Social Care	Btec		0	
Child Care	Btec		0	

EHCP Progress and Outcomes

Measure	Outcome
Pupils with EHCPs	10
Annual Reviews Completed	10
Outcomes Fully Achieved	2
Outcomes Partially Achieved	3
Outcomes Progressed Towards	5

Key SEND Highlights

- 100% of statutory EHCP Annual Reviews were completed during the 2025-26 academic year, ensuring that all students' needs, provision and outcomes were reviewed in a timely manner and that support remained responsive to individual circumstances.
- All Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were completed and positively evaluated, with reports receiving green ratings. This reflects strong partnership working between education, care and Local Authority representatives and demonstrates effective oversight of student progress and wellbeing.

- The school actively participates in a wide range of multi-agency meetings, including Looked After Child reviews and fortnightly multidisciplinary meetings held on site. These meetings promote a collaborative, team-around-the-child approach, ensuring that all professionals are working towards shared outcomes and consistent support strategies.
- The majority of students made measurable progress towards their EHCP outcomes, despite many joining the school with significant barriers to learning and, in some cases, remaining on roll for relatively short periods. Progress has been evident across attendance, emotional regulation, engagement, communication and academic development.
- The introduction of individualised EBSA contracts has significantly strengthened support for students experiencing school avoidance. These plans have helped students and staff establish realistic attendance goals, resulting in notable improvements in attendance, engagement and confidence in accessing education.
- The development of clear, consistent expectations between school, home and students has strengthened relationships and improved attendance outcomes. Students have benefited from a shared understanding of goals, responsibilities and support strategies, creating greater predictability and trust.
- The school's flexible approach to delivering education has enabled students with severe school-based anxiety to access learning in ways that meet their individual needs. By delivering lessons within the home environment where necessary, students who previously had little or no engagement with education have been supported to re-establish positive learning routines and gradually rebuild confidence in their ability to participate in education.
- The school has successfully broadened its interpretation of educational engagement, recognising that meaningful progress is not limited to formal classroom lessons. By utilising students' interests, strengths and preferred methods of engagement, staff have created learning opportunities that are relevant, contextualised and accessible. This approach has enabled previously disengaged students to reconnect with education and experience success.
- Weekly review meetings between pastoral staff, home managers and students (where appropriate) have strengthened communication and ensured support remains highly personalised. This coordinated approach has enabled staff to identify barriers quickly and adapt provision in response to changing needs.
- The introduction of protected pastoral time has had a significant impact on student wellbeing and relationship-building. Dedicated one-to-one sessions with pastoral staff have enabled students to develop trust in adults, feel listened to and gain confidence that their views, concerns and feelings are valued and respected. The creation of a dedicated pastoral room has further strengthened this provision by providing a welcoming and accessible space for support.

- A tranquil reading room has been developed to support emotional wellbeing, literacy development and anxiety reduction. Students have embraced this space as a calming environment where they can read independently, listen to stories and regulate emotions. Increased participation in protected reading sessions and voluntary use of the space during break and lunchtime periods demonstrates its positive impact.
- The development of a sensory room has further enhanced the school's therapeutic provision. Designed in collaboration with students, the room incorporates low-level lighting, sensory resources, tactile equipment and calming sounds and scents. By involving students in selecting and purchasing equipment, the school has promoted ownership, engagement and an increased understanding of self-regulation strategies.

Attendance & Engagement

Measure	Outcome
Whole School Attendance	25% (whole year)
Persistent Absence	All students at Dunbroch School sit within persistent absence due to long term emotional based barriers to education.
Attendance Improvement Cohort	Learner 1 improved attendance from 0% prior to the implementation of the EBSA support plan to an average of 60% during the final six weeks of the academic year. This represents a significant re-engagement with education for a student who had previously been unable to access school at all. Learner 2 had attendance of approximately 20% prior to the implementation of the EBSA support plan. Although attendance declined later in the year, this was largely due to an extended hospital admission followed by a period of recuperation at home. The school maintained engagement throughout this period through regular communication and continued support planning. Learner 3 had attendance of approximately 70% prior to the implementation of the EBSA support plan. Attendance reduced during the latter part of the Summer Term due to deteriorating health and the cessation of prescribed medication. Despite these challenges, MML continued to engage with education where possible, attending an average of 1-2 days per week and remaining connected to school support systems.
Pupils Improving by 10%+	1

Attendance Impact

- Clear expectations shared between school, home and students have strengthened relationships, improved consistency and contributed to increased attendance and engagement with education.
- The school's flexible approach to delivering lessons within the home environment has ensured that students continue to access education, even when anxiety or other barriers prevent them from attending the school building. This has enabled students to maintain educational engagement and sustain positive connections with trusted staff.
- There has been a notable reduction in school refusal, with students increasingly willing to engage with education through personalised and graduated support strategies.
- Student re-engagement with education has improved significantly, particularly for learners who had previously become disconnected from learning due to prolonged periods of absence and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).
- Attendance improvements have been seen across a number of students. One student increased attendance from 0% to periods of 60% attendance during the final weeks of the academic year, representing a significant achievement and demonstrating renewed confidence in accessing education.
- Punctuality has improved considerably across the cohort. Previously, late arrivals were a regular occurrence; however, only three late marks were recorded on BehaviourWatch during the reporting period, demonstrating improved routines, engagement and readiness to learn.
- Transition support has enabled successful progression planning for students moving to their next stage of education. One of the three students undergoing transition support successfully moved into their identified next provision, demonstrating the effectiveness of the school's personalised and collaborative approach to transition planning.

Impact Summary

Attendance at Dunbroch School reflects the complexity of the cohort and the cyclical nature of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). A common pattern observed throughout the year was that students would initially increase their attendance and engagement as trust, confidence and emotional safety developed. However, as expectations increased and students began to experience success in education, some students would then demonstrate a temporary rise in avoidance behaviours before gradually re-engaging again. This pattern reflects the fluctuating nature of SEMH needs and anxiety-driven school avoidance rather than a lack of progress. It is also influenced by the school's continually changing cohort, with new students frequently joining at differing stages of their educational journeys.

To address this, the Pastoral Lead conducts weekly meetings with residential homes and carers to review attendance, identify barriers and agree next steps. These collaborative discussions ensure that school, home and, where appropriate, the student work together to develop consistent strategies and realistic attendance goals. This team-around-the-child approach has strengthened relationships, improved communication and helped maintain a clear focus on re-engagement.

The school has also reviewed and expanded its enrichment offer as a key strategy for increasing engagement. Students have access to a broad range of activities including Art, Food Technology, Gym and Forest School, which was introduced this year. These enrichment opportunities are available across all key stages and provide students with alternative pathways into education that reduce anxiety whilst strengthening relationships with staff and peers. Where appropriate, students are able to opt out of enrichment activities to focus on GCSE studies or post-16 preparation, ensuring that provision remains personalised and responsive to their aspirations.

All students are offered at least one educational or socialisation trip each week. These experiences can include visits to museums, bowling, local attractions and community venues. Students are actively involved in choosing many of the reward and social opportunities that take place at the end of each half term, promoting student voice, ownership and engagement.

For students who are unable to access education either in school or at home, the school adopts a highly flexible approach. Where staffing permits, students may access personalised community-based learning opportunities linked to their interests, such as visits to parks, garden centres or cafés. Whilst students often perceive these experiences as enrichment activities, they provide valuable opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy, communication, budgeting, socialisation and independent living skills within meaningful real-life contexts. This approach reduces anxiety, rebuilds trust and demonstrates to students that education can be relevant, enjoyable and accessible.

As a result, the school has seen reductions in school refusal, improvements in engagement and increased willingness among students to access learning opportunities. Students who previously struggled to attend any form of education have begun re-engaging through personalised pathways, demonstrating growing confidence, resilience and trust in the educational process. These outcomes reflect the effectiveness of the school's trauma-informed, relationship-based approach and its commitment to meeting students where they are in their individual journeys.

Behaviour, Safety & Stability

Measure	Outcome
Reduction in Behaviour Incidents	24-25 – 19 (in total); 25-26 – 14 (in total)
Reduction in Suspensions	0
Reduction in Physical Interventions	4
Reduction in Missing from Education Episodes	0
Placement Stability Rate	13

Key Impact

- Staff completed additional Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) training, strengthening their understanding that behaviour is a form of communication. This training had a significant impact on practice, encouraging staff to look beyond presenting behaviours and consider the underlying unmet needs, emotions and experiences driving them. As a result, staff adopted a more reflective and therapeutic approach, leading to stronger relationships and more effective support for students.
- Behavioural strategies were discussed daily through morning and afternoon briefings, with input from clinical colleagues and residential staff where appropriate. These collaborative discussions ensured that staff had access to the most up-to-date information regarding individual student needs and that appropriate resources, interventions and support strategies were available when required. This proactive approach enabled staff to anticipate challenges and prevent escalation rather than responding reactively once incidents occurred.
- De-escalation strategies were reviewed regularly through staff training and the sharing of best practice. This ensured a consistent approach across the school and strengthened staff confidence in supporting students experiencing heightened emotions or distress.

- Staff received ongoing training in the effective use of student risk assessments, enabling them to better identify triggers, recognise early warning signs and implement preventative strategies. This has contributed to a reduction in escalated incidents and improved outcomes for students who require additional emotional and behavioural support.
- The school strengthened the use of pastoral and leadership support as part of its de-escalation model. The consistent involvement of pastoral staff and the Headteacher provided students with trusted adults who could intervene at an early stage, reducing anxiety and supporting successful regulation. This approach contributed to a reduction in situations requiring physical intervention.
- Specific training was delivered around the use of planned ignoring of behaviours while maintaining positive engagement with the child. Staff were supported to avoid reinforcing negative behaviours and instead focus on relationship-building through conversation, games, puzzles and positive interaction. This consistent approach encouraged increased engagement from students who had previously relied on negative behaviours as a means of communication, resulting in improved relationships, greater participation and a reduction in physical interventions.
- During the Spring Term, the school introduced personalised EBSA contracts to support students experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance. These contracts were developed collaboratively with students and residential homes, establishing clear expectations, agreed targets and shared responsibilities. Early evidence demonstrated positive improvements in attendance, engagement and accountability, particularly for students who had previously struggled to access education consistently.

Personal Development Outcomes

Emotional Wellbeing

At Dunbroch School, emotional wellbeing is viewed as a fundamental prerequisite to successful learning. Recognising the complex SEMH needs and histories of trauma experienced by students, the school has developed a range of therapeutic and relationship-based interventions designed to build resilience, emotional regulation and psychological safety.

All students are offered dedicated protected time with the Pastoral Lead each week, providing an uninterrupted opportunity to discuss concerns, celebrate successes and seek support from a trusted adult. Students also have access to the school's sensory room whenever required, helping them develop confidence that support is available when needed and that their thoughts, feelings and experiences are valued.

A wide range of anxiety-reduction strategies are embedded throughout the school. Every student has access to a personalised sensory box, which they help to create and tailor to their individual sensory needs. Additional sensory resources are available in all classrooms, ensuring that students can access regulation strategies throughout the school day. Occupational Therapy assessments are completed where appropriate, enabling staff to better understand and respond to each student's sensory profile. As a result, students are increasingly able to recognise, manage and self-soothe periods of anxiety and distress.

Individualised regulation plans and personalised Zones of Regulation strategies are developed collaboratively with students, ensuring that approaches are tailored to their specific needs. This personalised approach supports students to develop greater self-awareness, emotional literacy and independence when managing their emotions.

All students are assigned a key worker within school and can access up to five key-working sessions per week. These sessions provide opportunities to develop trusted relationships with adults, explore challenges and identify solutions to barriers affecting wellbeing and engagement. Students also have access to the Pastoral Lead and Headteacher through an open-door approach, reinforcing the school's commitment to being emotionally available and responsive to need.

The school has further strengthened its therapeutic practice through the implementation of the PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) approach. Staff have received training delivered by the Clinical Lead, enabling school staff and residential teams to adopt a consistent therapeutic approach that promotes trust, emotional safety and healthy relationships.

The school's extensive outdoor environment also plays a significant role in supporting wellbeing. Students are encouraged to access outdoor learning opportunities, Forest School activities and the surrounding grounds as a means of reducing anxiety, regulating emotions and developing a positive connection with nature. These opportunities support emotional wellbeing, resilience and self-regulation while providing students with alternative ways to engage in learning and therapeutic activities.

Social Development

Developing positive relationships remains a central focus of school life. As a small specialist provision where all students live on site, opportunities for social interaction are both unique and intensive. Whilst this can present challenges for students with significant SEMH needs and histories of trauma, it also provides valuable opportunities to develop relationship skills, empathy and mutual respect.

The school actively supports students in building and maintaining positive peer relationships through structured opportunities for social interaction. Breakfasts, breaktimes and lunchtime sessions are used as social experiences where students and staff come together to talk, eat and strengthen relationships in a relaxed and supportive environment. Weekly educational and enrichment trips further promote positive social interactions, teamwork and communication.

Enrichment plays a significant role in re-engaging students with education and supporting social development. Students access a broad programme that includes Art, Food Technology, Physical Education, Forest School and a specialist Hair and Beauty salon. These activities provide opportunities for students to develop confidence, explore interests and experience success in different contexts while strengthening relationships with staff and peers.

The school has actively developed leadership opportunities for students, recognising the importance of student voice and empowerment. Students have planned and delivered training sessions to education, residential and clinical staff, sharing their experiences and perspectives to improve practice. Students have also delivered lessons to peers and staff on areas of personal interest and expertise, developing confidence, communication skills and leadership capabilities.

Students have engaged positively in community-focused projects throughout the year. Food bank collection points were established across the site, resulting in significant donations to local food banks. During the Christmas period, students coordinated the collection and donation of more than 50 selection boxes to support families within the local community. Additional fundraising and donation activities have supported local animal shelters and community initiatives.

Regular visits to local charity shops have also enabled students to develop community awareness and resourcefulness. Students successfully created a reading nook within the English classroom using donated and recycled resources, whilst annual book collection initiatives have supported both the school and local community book banks. These experiences have strengthened students' understanding of citizenship, social responsibility and the value of contributing positively to their communities.

Independence & Life Skills

Preparation for adulthood is embedded throughout the curriculum and personalised to meet individual needs and aspirations.

Students work collaboratively with staff to create personalised recipe books that they can take with them when they leave school. These cookbooks contain healthy, practical and cost-effective meals that students have prepared themselves, supporting the development of independent living skills and encouraging healthy lifestyle choices.

The school's Occupational Therapist plays an important role in developing everyday life skills that support future independence. Students are supported to develop practical skills such as using public transport, travelling safely, purchasing items independently and managing personal finances. These experiences help students build confidence in navigating the wider community and increase readiness for adulthood.

Regular careers guidance is provided through visits from a Careers Adviser each half term. Students are supported to explore future pathways, careers of interest and the qualifications required to achieve their aspirations. Careers displays within the school provide clear information regarding educational pathways, GCSE requirements, further education options and apprenticeship opportunities, helping students make informed decisions about their futures.

Financial literacy is embedded across the curriculum, particularly within Mathematics and Food Technology. Students develop practical budgeting skills through planning and preparing meals, shopping for ingredients and managing spending within allocated budgets. School trips and community activities provide further opportunities to apply these skills in real-life situations, with students encouraged to budget, make purchases and manage money with appropriate levels of support.

Preparation for Adulthood

Outcome Area	Number Achieved
Work Experience Placements	None
Employer Encounters	None
Careers Interviews	6 per year. We have an External Independent Careers Advisor who visits the school every 6 weeks and we also use Xello.
Employability Awards	0
Life Skills Qualifications	0

Careers and Aspirations

Many of our students arrive at Dunbroch School feeling disconnected from their future possibilities. Due to previous educational disruption, low self-confidence and negative experiences of learning, they can struggle to see themselves achieving academically, securing employment or progressing successfully into adulthood. A key focus of the school's work has therefore been to raise aspirations, rebuild self-belief and provide students with a clear understanding of how their current efforts can support future success.

Students are supported to explore their interests, strengths and career ambitions through personalised careers education and regular discussions about future pathways. The school works proactively to help students understand the practical steps required to achieve their aspirations, enabling them to make informed decisions and develop realistic but ambitious goals.

To broaden horizons and increase awareness of available opportunities, students are supported to attend careers fairs, college open days and university visits. These experiences allow students to explore a range of educational and employment pathways, meet professionals and gain first-hand insight into future opportunities that they may not have previously considered achievable.

An independent Careers Adviser works directly with each student to develop a personalised careers action plan and progression roadmap. This enables students to understand where they are currently, identify their long-term goals and map out the qualifications, skills, experiences and next steps required to achieve their chosen destination. By breaking aspirations into manageable and achievable milestones, students develop greater confidence in their ability to succeed and a clearer understanding of how education supports their future ambitions.

As a result, students are increasingly able to articulate their future goals, identify potential career pathways and recognise the value of education in helping them achieve their aspirations. This has led to increased motivation, greater engagement with learning and improved confidence in planning for adulthood, further education and employment.

Destinations

Destination	Number
Further Education	0
Apprenticeships	0
Supported Internships	0
Employment	0
Specialist Provision	13
Other	0

Positive Destinations

50% of leavers moved into a sustained positive destination.

Destination Highlights

- One student achieved an exceptional transition outcome following a history of significant adversity and educational disruption. Having been in care since the age of 10, arriving at the school on a high level of support and having been out of formal education for more than two years, the student made remarkable progress during their time at Dunbroch School. Through a personalised and therapeutic approach, they successfully progressed to a full-time timetable, reduced their support requirements, developed greater independence and participated in their first unsupervised home visits. Within just over a year, the student was able to successfully return to family care and transition into a mainstream school placement, representing a significant achievement in both their educational and personal journey.

- Three students successfully progressed into semi-independent living and continued their education through college placements. These students have been able to access further education opportunities and work towards additional qualifications that support their long-term aspirations, independence and employability. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the school's preparation for adulthood programme and its commitment to supporting sustainable post-school destinations.

Student Success Stories

Student Spotlight 1

Starting Point

Learner 1 arrived at Dunbroch School presenting with significant emotional vulnerability, difficulties with self-regulation and substantial barriers to social interaction and educational engagement. They experienced high levels of anxiety and hypervigilance, often misinterpreting the actions and intentions of others as threatening. Sleep was frequently disrupted by nightmares, further impacting emotional wellbeing and daily functioning.

Prior to joining the school, Learner 1 had experienced considerable instability and found the prospect of another placement move extremely challenging. Having formed positive relationships in their previous setting, the transition was perceived as another rejection, further undermining confidence and trust in adults. The placing Local Authority identified a need for a stable environment where Learner 1 could develop secure relationships, receive support to reduce self-harming behaviours and learn strategies to manage emotions more effectively.

At the point of admission, Learner 1 presented with significant risk-taking and self-harming behaviours, alongside difficulties managing distress safely. These behaviours frequently required intensive support and intervention from adults and were often linked to feelings of insecurity, anxiety and a lack of emotional safety. Much of their behaviour reflected a young person operating in a persistent state of heightened alertness and survival mode, unable to see a positive pathway forward.

Progress and Achievement

During their time at Dunbroch School, Learner 1 made exceptional progress in emotional regulation, engagement and personal development.

Through consistent therapeutic support, strong relationships with trusted adults and a calm, structured environment, Learner 1 gradually developed the skills needed to recognise, communicate and manage their emotions more effectively. Whilst progress was not always linear and there were periods of challenge and setback, the overall trajectory was one of significant growth and increasing resilience.

Within six months, Learner 1 demonstrated a noticeable improvement in self-regulation and emotional stability. As feelings of psychological safety increased, incidents of self-harm reduced and engagement with education improved. Learner 1 was able to access learning on a full-time basis and began developing confidence in their ability to succeed within school. A significant challenge throughout this journey was accepting progress and success. At times, increased engagement in education led to anxiety around what it meant to be "doing well," as previous experiences had shaped a view of themselves as someone who struggled and could not achieve.

A key turning point occurred when Learner 1 was able to identify and invest in a future outcome that was personally meaningful. Having a clear goal provided motivation, purpose and hope, enabling them to sustain engagement and continue making progress despite ongoing challenges.

Destination

The most significant outcome for Learner 1 was successfully returning to live with their father and younger sibling. This transition provided the stability, belonging and future-focused motivation that they had worked towards throughout their time at Dunbroch School.

Following this achievement, Learner 1 demonstrated increased confidence, improved attendance and sustained engagement with learning. They actively participated in lessons, enabling the successful review and updating of their EHCP to reflect the substantial progress made and the support required moving forward.

As a result, Learner 1 secured a place at a local mainstream school close to the family home. Since returning home, they have settled well into both family life and their new educational setting. Whilst SEMH needs remain present, Learner 1 is now able to identify and utilise the strategies developed during their time at Dunbroch School to support emotional regulation, manage challenges and engage positively in education.

Their journey represents a powerful example of how stability, therapeutic relationships, high aspirations and a trauma-informed approach can help a young person move from crisis and uncertainty towards confidence, belonging and a positive future.

Student Spotlight 2

Starting Point

Learner 2 joined Dunbroch School following a prolonged period out of education. Prior to admission, educational engagement had been extremely limited, with access restricted to occasional sessions within a hospital education setting. Even then, participation in learning was highly challenging due to significant social, emotional and mental health needs and previous negative experiences associated with education.

The transition into residential care and a new educational environment was particularly difficult. Learner 2 experienced high levels of anxiety and placed considerable pressure on themselves to achieve, often viewing education as a measure of personal success or failure. As a result, they found it extremely difficult to engage with school and initially struggled to attend or participate in learning activities.

Recognising these barriers, the school prioritised relationship-building and emotional safety. Rather than expecting immediate engagement within the classroom, staff worked alongside residential colleagues to develop positive relationships in the home environment. Through low-pressure interactions and personalised support, trust gradually developed, creating the foundations for future engagement in education.

Progress and Achievement

Learner 2's progress was the result of a carefully planned, relationship-based approach that focused on trust, emotional regulation and gradual reintegration into learning.

Enrichment activities were initially used as a bridge into education, enabling Learner 2 to engage with trusted staff through shared interests and positive experiences. Over time, this confidence and trust extended beyond enrichment activities, allowing them to access learning within the school environment and gradually engage with academic subjects such as English and Mathematics.

Progress was not linear and there were periods where attendance fluctuated significantly due to ongoing SEMH needs. At times, Learner 2 achieved full attendance and strong engagement, whilst at other times emotional challenges made attending school difficult. However, despite these barriers, they continued to make progress and increasingly demonstrated resilience when faced with setbacks.

One of the most significant achievements was Learner 2's successful participation in GCSE examinations. This represented a remarkable milestone for a young person who had previously been unable to engage with education and had spent considerable time outside of school. Through perseverance, therapeutic support and the consistent encouragement of staff, Learner 2 was able to achieve qualifications and experience educational success.

Destination

During the academic year, Learner 2 transitioned into semi-independent accommodation following their eighteenth birthday. Whilst this brought additional challenges and initially affected engagement with education and support services, the foundations established during their time at Dunbroch School continued to influence their future aspirations and decision-making.

Following their transition, Learner 2 successfully secured a place on a Level 2 Health and Social Care course, reflecting both their ambition and the progress they had made in rebuilding confidence in their abilities. The learner maintained contact with the school and shared news of their college acceptance, expressing appreciation for the support and encouragement they had received throughout their journey.

This outcome demonstrates the impact of a patient, trauma-informed and relationship-based approach. Learner 2 progressed from a position of significant educational disengagement and anxiety to successfully accessing qualifications, progressing into further education and developing a positive vision for their future.

Whole School Achievements

Awards and Accreditations

- Workforce Development: A member of staff successfully achieved a Level 5 Specialist Teaching Assistant (SEND) qualification, further strengthening the school's expertise in supporting students with complex SEND and SEMH needs. This additional knowledge and specialist understanding have enhanced the school's capacity to provide high-quality, individualised support and remove barriers to learning.
- Development of the EBSA Model: During 2025-26, the school developed and implemented a dedicated Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) model, which is now embedded within practice and available to support all students attending Dunbroch School. The model provides a clear framework for understanding, assessing and responding to attendance barriers, enabling students to re-engage with education through personalised and therapeutic approaches.
- Expanded Student Experiences: The school successfully broadened the range of educational, social and enrichment experiences available to students. These opportunities enabled students to access new environments, challenge themselves positively, develop confidence and resilience, and expand their understanding of the wider world beyond school.
- Strengthened Community and Cross-Service Collaboration: Students benefited from a range of shared events and activities across the wider Merida community, including summer celebrations, fundays, water-based activities and BBQ events. These opportunities promoted social interaction, relationship-building and a sense of belonging, whilst enabling students to develop confidence in larger group settings and engage positively with peers and adults from across different services.

Enrichment and Community Impact

Throughout the 2025-26 academic year, students actively participated in a broad range of enrichment, sporting, creative and community-based activities that supported personal development, confidence, resilience and engagement beyond the classroom.

Students accessed six educational visits, providing opportunities to broaden cultural capital, experience new environments and apply learning in real-world contexts. These experiences supported the development of social confidence, communication skills and independence while encouraging students to engage positively with the wider community.

Students also achieved success through four sporting activities and events, developing teamwork, perseverance, physical wellbeing and confidence. Participation in sporting opportunities encouraged students to challenge themselves, build resilience and experience achievement outside of academic learning.

Creative expression remained an important aspect of personal development, with students participating in two arts and creative initiatives. These opportunities enabled students to explore their interests, showcase their talents and develop confidence through artistic and creative achievement.

The school completed two community-focused projects, allowing students to contribute positively to their local area while developing empathy, citizenship skills and an understanding of social responsibility. These projects strengthened students' sense of belonging and demonstrated the value of making a positive contribution to society.

Students also participated in six social action and volunteering initiatives, providing opportunities to support local causes, engage with community organisations and develop an awareness of the needs of others. Through these experiences, students developed compassion, responsibility and a stronger understanding of active citizenship.

Quality Improvement Highlights

- Curriculum Developments: The curriculum offer has been significantly expanded during 2025-26 to better reflect students' interests, aspirations and future pathways. New subject areas, including Health and Social Care and British Sign Language (BSL), have been introduced, providing students with broader learning experiences and increased opportunities to explore vocational and academic interests. These additions have strengthened engagement, raised aspirations and supported preparation for adulthood and future careers.
- Therapy and Wellbeing Developments: The school has worked closely with the on-site clinical team to ensure a joined-up and therapeutic approach to supporting students' emotional wellbeing and mental health. This collaborative working has strengthened assessment, intervention planning and support strategies, ensuring students receive consistent care across education, residential and clinical provision. In addition, wellbeing days were extended to include both staff and students, creating opportunities to build positive relationships, strengthen the school community and promote wellbeing in a less formal environment.
- Staff Development Initiatives: The school continues to invest in professional development and workforce growth. During the year, two members of staff enrolled on apprenticeship programmes to strengthen their professional skills and further develop their expertise in supporting students with complex needs. This commitment to continuous professional development ensures that students continue to benefit from highly skilled and knowledgeable practitioners.
- Successful Partnerships: Strong partnerships with local organisations and community groups have enhanced both educational opportunities and community engagement. The school worked collaboratively with a local secondary school to support a student in accessing practical elements required for their GCSE Chemistry course, ensuring they could fully participate in the qualification. Students have also actively contributed to several community initiatives, including supporting local food banks through donations and Christmas collection campaigns, as well as fundraising and collecting essential items such as blankets, bedding and pet food for local animal rescue organisations. These partnerships have provided meaningful opportunities for students to develop empathy, citizenship skills and a sense of social responsibility.

Headteacher's Impact Statement

What difference has the school made this year?

This year, Dunbroch School has continued to be a transformative educational environment for some of our most vulnerable young people. Through a highly personalised, trauma-informed and relationship-based approach, the school has successfully re-engaged students who previously experienced significant barriers to education, including prolonged school absence, Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in their own abilities and future potential.

A key strength of the school has been its ability to create an environment where students feel safe, valued and understood. By prioritising psychological safety and trusting relationships, students have begun to challenge their negative perceptions of education and themselves. Many learners who initially struggled to attend school, engage with adults or participate in learning have developed the confidence to access education, build positive relationships and take meaningful steps towards achieving their personal and academic goals.

The school's flexible and innovative approach has enabled students to re-engage with education through enrichment, therapeutic support and personalised learning pathways. Opportunities both within school and in the wider community have encouraged students to step beyond their comfort zones, develop resilience and experience success in a variety of contexts. Through educational visits, community projects, enrichment activities and vocational opportunities, students have broadened their horizons, developed social confidence and increased their aspirations for the future.

Dunbroch School has also placed a strong emphasis on helping students understand that their futures are not defined by their past experiences. Through careers education, employability support and preparation for adulthood programmes, students are increasingly able to identify ambitions, explore future pathways and recognise the steps required to achieve their goals. This has fostered a growing sense of hope, purpose and self-belief.

The impact of this work can be seen not only in improvements to attendance, engagement and educational outcomes, but also in the confidence, independence and resilience demonstrated by students across all aspects of school life. Students are increasingly willing to take positive risks, engage in learning, contribute to their community and invest in their future success.

As we conclude the 2025-26 academic year, the school can clearly demonstrate that by combining therapeutic support, high expectations and meaningful relationships, students who once felt disconnected from education are beginning to see themselves as learners, contributors and young people with positive futures ahead of them.

Key Impact Measures

Academic

Qualifications Achieved: No data available.

Engagement

Attendance decrease: 7%

Behaviour

Reduction in Incidents: 19.5%

Wellbeing

Pupils Demonstrating Improved Emotional Regulation 20%

Destinations

Positive Destinations: 50%

Independence

Pupils Achieving Key Independence Milestones: 30%