

Sutherland House School

Bath Street, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG1 1DA

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have successfully increased their ambition for Sutherland House School. They have created a good school where pupils make good progress.
- Input from the governing board and key partners has strengthened the school's leadership, quality of teaching and the progress pupils make.
- The curriculum is aptly designed around the needs of individual pupils. Senior leaders are adept at ensuring that changes to the curriculum result in better outcomes for pupils. In some curriculum areas, there are underdeveloped systems for checking how well pupils are learning.
- Safeguarding is effective. The designated safeguarding lead is tenacious in her work to ensure that pupils are protected from harm.
- Recently appointed middle leaders have made a positive start to their roles. They ensure that the curriculum is appropriate to meet the needs of pupils. They do not yet routinely monitor the progress pupils make in order to bring about key improvements for all pupils.
- The skilled clinical team members provide a positive contribution to the education of pupils at the school. Their direct input with pupils and professional advice to their colleagues support pupils to make good progress.
- Most parents are satisfied with the work of the school. However, school leaders do not ensure that all parents fully understand the considerable changes made across the school, and about the learning activities and progress their child is making.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good across all key stages. Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils very well and contribute positively to pupils' learning. Some activities provided to pupils are not always supporting their progress.
- Pupils generally make good progress from their different starting points, across a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics.
- Pupils generally behave well. Pupils' behaviour improves the longer they attend the school.
- The quality of 16 to 19 study programmes offered to pupils is good. Work experience opportunities afforded to some pupils support the good progress they make towards the next steps in their education, employment or training.
- The staff team members support the improved vision of the school. They are exceptionally positive about the improvements made across the school and help to fulfil the mission statement 'ensuring individual independent success for all students'.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve how effectively school leaders work with parents, so that parents fully understand about all aspects of school life.
- Improve pupils' progress by ensuring that all aspects of the curriculum have a robust assessment system in place to inform teachers' planning.
- Improve the progress pupils make by ensuring that subject leaders carefully analyse and respond to information about how well pupils are achieving.
- Improve teaching by ensuring that all times of the day are used effectively to promote pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leadership and governance have been strengthened since the last inspection. Leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching so that it is now good. The senior leader responsible for teaching and learning has an excellent understanding of the strengths of teaching and how to improve pupils' learning.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed to lead the school. He has ensured that the staff team is much more ambitious for the school. Leaders have improved the quality of teaching by working effectively with other institutions, such as Transform Teaching School Alliance, Rosehill Special School and the Dearne Advanced Learning Centre.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to others in the school because the pupil premium funding is targeted at appropriate provision. All pupils' communication skills, including disadvantaged pupils' communication skills, have been enhanced through the provision of improved training for staff.
- Pupils' sporting experiences are enhanced as a result of the physical education and sport funding being used to purchase fitness equipment and improve the outside areas to promote physical activity. Leaders recognise that many pupils need access to high-quality physical activity in order to learn well.
- Pupils participate in a positive school experience because the staff enjoy their work and are proud to be part of the school. Leaders support their staff team well. One member of staff commented, 'It is an exciting time for the school.' This was typical of many comments from staff. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant change to the constitution of the staff team, which has understandably slowed some aspects of school improvement.
- The management of staff performance is significantly improved since the last inspection. All staff have access to professional conversations with their line managers about the effectiveness of their work. These systems allow staff to access appropriate training and development.
- Staff are increasingly skilled at their jobs because they access a wealth of training activity. A comprehensive programme of staff development is in place throughout the whole academic year. School staff and the clinical team deliver training which enhances staff knowledge and skills, including communication strategies and autism training. New staff access a two-week induction period led by Autism East Midlands.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well throughout the curriculum and through special planned activities. Where appropriate, pupils learn about key world events, such as the instances of terrorist attacks and religious festivals, such as Diwali. The school council ensures that pupils have opportunities to learn about democracy and voting. This helps pupils to understand about life in modern Britain.
- Parents are generally happy about the progress their son or daughter is making at Sutherland House. Some parents are concerned about the quality of education their child is receiving. A common theme among the parents who are not currently satisfied

with the work of the school, is that they do not receive all the information they need about their child's time at school. Inspectors agree that more could be done to foster excellent relationships between parents and school staff.

- Leaders have satisfactory systems in place to check the progress that each pupil is making across a range of academic subjects and within their personal development. Not all curriculum areas have good systems in place to measure the progress pupils are making. As a result, key leaders across subjects are not yet able to respond speedily to instances where pupils are not making the progress they could.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has significantly improved its work since the last inspection. A new chair of the governing body has taken up post since the last inspection. She provides a strong drive to keep improving the school and brings a wealth of professional expertise to the role. Many staff recognise the pivotal role the chair of the governing body has in improving the school.
- Governors demonstrate a determination to ensure that the school is a professional organisation, while maintaining a caring ethos. Governors have ensured that there are professional expectations of the staff team and that any underperformance of staff is tackled.
- Governors receive good-quality information from the headteacher and the minutes of meetings demonstrate that they consistently challenge him to keep improving key systems in order to benefit the pupils' education.
- Each governor has a lead responsibility, such as safeguarding or the quality of teaching. Governors visit the school and undertake activities, which help them to be well informed and ask probing questions of the senior leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. High levels of adult supervision contribute effectively to pupils staying safe both in and out of school.
- The staff team receives training in how to keep children safe. This is a key aspect of the induction process for all staff. Staff are well trained in the use of de-escalation to manage challenging behaviour.
- Procedures for the recruitment of staff are effective. The necessary checks are completed on new staff to ensure that they are suitable to work at the school. During the inspection, records about the checks undertaken on staff were further improved so that leaders can be assured that they are doing all they can to keep pupils safe.
- An effective safeguarding policy is in place and it reflects the latest national guidance. The policy ensures that leaders engage effectively with staff, parents and pupils to keep pupils safe. Three senior leaders have received a high level of training regarding the safety of pupils. They have ensured that the staff team has completed appropriate training in how to spot any signs of abuse.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Despite significant change to the teaching and teaching assistant team since the last inspection, the pupils enjoy excellent relationships with the adults who support them. Staff take the time to understand individual pupils' needs, which help them to support and challenge each pupil effectively. Inspectors observed many staff engaging pupils in positive communication by using the key interests of the pupil.
- Pupils receive good-quality teaching because they are supported by staff who are passionate about their jobs. The staff team is constantly developing new approaches to help pupils to make the best progress they can. One parent commented that the staff 'make the impossible possible'.
- Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Where teaching is most effective, teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Additionally, the effective use of visual cues and the clear spoken language of adults prepare pupils well for the next steps in their learning.
- Teaching is good across a wide range of subjects. Teachers, teaching assistants and members of the clinical team assess what pupils can do and implement plans to support pupils to make further progress.
- Pupils learn well because staff support them to manage any anxieties caused by changes to the school day. Transitions between activities within a lesson or between lessons are managed effectively through clear communication and sensitivity.
- Subject specialist teaching is further improving the quality of teaching. Where this happens, the effective learning is characterised by skilled staff marrying their good subject knowledge with a comprehensive understanding of the individual pupil and autism.
- On occasion, time is not always used effectively in lessons to promote pupils' progress. Some activities lack a sharp focus and are not engaging enough to maintain the attention of the pupil.
- Not all aspects of the curriculum have a robust assessment system in place to inform teachers' planning. This hinders the actions of staff to support pupils to make the progress they could. Leaders have recognised this weakness and already have comprehensive plans in place to address this.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils' personal achievements are celebrated well throughout each day and during whole-school assemblies.
- Pupils benefit from effective personal support, which improves their behaviour and ability to access their learning. This is because staff know pupils well. Pupils are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone, for example by participating in school

shows.

- Pupils' welfare is uppermost in the staff team's thinking. During significantly challenging incidents, the staff team is able to respond appropriately to help pupils stay safe. Inspectors observed staff quickly moving classroom furniture and other pupils away from danger in order to keep everyone safe.
- Since the last inspection, pupils have increasing access to activities which support their physical development, such as swimming, inter-school sport competitions and other outdoor pursuits. The appointment of a lead teacher for 'active learning' has been pivotal in ensuring that pupils have access to these opportunities.
- Pupils' emotional well-being and self-awareness are effectively promoted through the use of tutorials throughout the week. These sessions also allow pupils time to pursue activities which promote positive behaviours and improve their communication skills.
- Opportunities are taken each day to teach pupils about how to stay safe. Pupils are taught a range of strategies throughout the curriculum, such as how to prepare food safely or move around the school sensibly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Positive behaviours are promoted at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Opportunities are seized by staff to promote pupils' social interactions and develop skills, such as using knives and forks correctly.
- Pupils grow in confidence and maturity during their time at the school. Pupils benefit from comprehensive, individual, positive-behaviour support plans, which help staff to support them effectively.
- Pupils make good progress in managing their own behaviour in different locations. During their time at the school, pupils have increasing access to learning outside of the school environment, which supports them to be prepared well for life after school.
- Pupils generally enjoy coming to school and the attendance of most pupils is good. Where the attendance of individual pupils becomes a concern, the staff team works effectively with the pupil and their family to address this issue.
- During their time at the school, pupils' negative behaviour usually becomes less frequent. The staff team is increasingly skilled at supporting pupils to learn new ways to communicate their needs and wishes. There is a downward trend of restrictive physical interventions being used to manage the most challenging incidents. There are occasions when the challenging behaviour of some pupils disrupts the learning of others.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school does not have published data about pupils' outcomes at the end of each key stage because of the small cohort sizes and the low attainment levels of most pupils. Inspection evidence gathered through looking at the school's pupils' progress information, visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and speaking with staff and

indicates that pupils make good progress from their different starting points during their time at the school.

- Some pupils enter the school after having had a negative experience at their previous school or having missed education for a prolonged period of time. These pupils have significant gaps in their learning. School staff are proficient in supporting these pupils to catch-up as quickly as they can.
- Pupils' learning usually gets off to a good start at the school because staff take the time to get to know the pupil well. The staff team adapts pupils' work and the environment as a result of assessing the abilities and behaviour of pupils quickly on entry to the school. For instance, there are numerous examples of personalised displays for individual pupils around the school. This helps these pupils to focus on their work and feel comfortable in their surroundings.
- Challenging academic targets are set for pupils in a wide range of subjects. Good teaching secures strong progress towards these targets, particularly within mathematics. However, while still good overall, the school's assessment information confirms that progress in reading and writing is slower than in mathematics.
- As a result of personalised support, those disadvantaged pupils make generally the same progress in a range of subjects as other pupils in the school with the same starting points.
- Good teaching, personalised support, careers advice and a flexible curriculum lead to pupils making good progress across a range of subjects. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, training, employment or care.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The quality of provision for students aged 16 to 19 is good. Leaders have ensured that students benefit from a highly personalised learning programme that supports effectively their future aspirations.
- Students achieve good outcomes during their time participating in the 16 to 19 study programme. Students make good progress from their individual starting points and increasingly achieve a range of appropriate qualifications and accreditations.
- Leaders have raised their aspirations for what students can achieve after they leave Sutherland House School. Students access impartial careers advice and guidance that supports them to prepare them and their families for the next stage of their education, employment, training or care. As part of their personalised programmes pupils are able to access work-related opportunities that support their aspirations.
- Teaching for students aged 16 to 19 is good. Students increasingly develop their independence and acquire appropriate skills for life after school, such as independent shopping skills. This is balanced against academic study and preparation for examinations where appropriate.
- Students aged 16 to 19 have access to a curriculum which enables them to develop their English and mathematical skills and knowledge suited to their individual needs. Students continue to make good progress in these aspects of the curriculum.
- Most students complete their 16 to 19 study programme at Sutherland House School.

On occasion, the effective process for reviewing the students' education, health and care plans results in pupils moving to a more appropriate placement before the age of 19.

- As a result of good provision, students usually go on to further study, into suitable care placements or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	134889
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10036079

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Dawn Green
Headteacher	Adrian Sugden
Telephone number	01159 609263
Website	www.autismeastmidlands.org.uk
Email address	schoolreferrals@autismeastmidlands.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 October 2015

Information about this school

- Sutherland House is a non-maintained special school for pupils with autism and is managed by Autism East Midlands and a local governing board.
- Currently, the school does not have any pupils under the age of six. The majority of pupils are White British boys. A significant number of the pupils present challenging behaviour and have additional disabilities or special educational needs. Some pupils have had long-term absence from education before coming to Sutherland House.
- The school benefits from a close working relationship with therapists employed by Autism East Midlands.

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and new chair of the governing body have been appointed to lead the school.
- At the time of the last inspection, the school was located across five different sites in and around Nottingham. The school is now located on one site near the centre of Nottingham city.
- The school does not use alternative providers to deliver education for the pupils.
- The school works closely with Transform Teaching School Alliance, Rosehill Special School and the Dearne Advanced Learning Centre.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has dropped by a third.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across all year groups. The vast majority of these observations took place alongside a senior member of staff.
- Pupils' behaviour during arrival at school, in lessons and at leisure times was observed by inspectors. Records related to the management of challenging behaviour were scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils about their learning in lessons. Inspectors observed pupils reading both text and symbols during visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders to evaluate the impact of their work since the previous inspection to improve pupils' outcomes and strengthen the quality of teaching. This included meetings with subject leaders and teachers, including representatives of the teaching assistant team.
- Inspectors reviewed work in pupils' books and folders to evaluate the quality of learning in different areas of learning over time. Current assessment information on how well pupils achieve was scrutinised by inspectors.
- Meetings were held with three members of the governing body, including the chair, and separately with members of the Autism East Midlands therapy team.
- Documentation related to safeguarding was scrutinised. This included records relating to the school's work to safeguard pupils at risk of harm.
- Twenty-four responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were analysed. Three parents were spoken with directly by inspectors and seven parents wrote to inspectors via the Parent View facility.
- Thirty staff questionnaires were returned to inspectors.

Inspection team

Phil Harrison, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Heather Hawkes

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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