

Old Sams Farm Independent School

Old Sams Farm, Quarnford, Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 0SN

Inspection dates

3–5 July 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders and staff have an excellent understanding of the individual behaviours and learning characteristics of each pupil. As a result, they provide a relevant curriculum and plan well for effective teaching and learning.
- Staff have an accurate understanding of the extent of pupils' progress because of increasingly effective arrangements for assessment and review.
- Pupils make good progress from relatively low starting points in their learning and personal development. Pupils, parents and carers value the quality of education and personal support which underpins these positive outcomes.
- The headteacher has successfully encouraged cooperation and mutual support among the teaching staff. Pupils learn to respond to consistent expectations of behaviour and engagement in lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance are good. This demonstrates strong progress from their outcomes in previous settings.
- The school provides a safe environment. Staff are vigilant in their attention to the safeguarding of pupils.
- The proprietor, executive headteacher and quality assurance manager provide very effective leadership and support for the school. They ask the right questions and rigorously review the school's evidence that pupils are making expected progress.
- Senior leaders have a well-informed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. They check classroom practice and pupils' learning regularly and accurately. The records of self-evaluation do not make sufficiently precise use of the wealth of evidence collected and recorded.
- All pupils make substantial progress. However, the progress of the most able pupils could be accelerated further.
- The school provides effectively for the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils. Their cultural development and preparation for life beyond school are not sufficiently developed.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the level of challenge for the most able pupils by:
 - further developing their oral contributions to lessons
 - ensuring that they have sufficient time in lessons to complete the higher-level tasks prepared for them.
- Extend pupils' social and cultural development by providing:
 - access to a more extensive range of activities and services in the wider community
 - appropriately planned contact with representatives of a more culturally diverse society.
- Provide additional activities within the key stage 3 curriculum for pupils to begin to prepare for their future pathways into further education and employment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The good quality of leadership and management is based on a shared vision and effective teamwork. The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. They work together to ensure that policies and procedures are understood by all staff and implemented consistently.
- The headteacher communicates high expectations for what pupils should achieve. She works closely with all staff members to ensure that the needs and personal characteristics of each pupil are identified and responded to consistently.
- All staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire believe that the school is well led and managed, and the school has an effective impact on pupils' progress and personal development. Parents and carers similarly believe that staff understand their children and provide appropriately for their individual needs.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity for all pupils. The curriculum ensures that all pupils have access to a wide range of areas of learning. Classroom learning is balanced well by popular outdoor activities. Staff ensure that activities and tasks provide appropriately for the vast majority of aspects of pupils' learning.
- The school contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Throughout the curriculum, there are activities that challenge pupils to be reflective and to consider the views and needs of others.
- The outdoor education programme contributes effectively to pupils' willingness to challenge themselves and to try new experiences. Currently, pupils have limited opportunities to engage with the wider community or to develop respect and tolerance for cultural diversity.
- Previous key stage 4 pupils have benefited from individual advice and guidance as they prepared for the transition to further education or employment. The school ensures that each pupil receives independent advice about the options available to them as they leave compulsory schooling. Pupils at key stage 3 begin to consider their future aspirations but this work is not fully developed in a planned and systematic manner.
- Senior leaders demonstrate the capacity to bring about further improvement in the quality of teaching, and pupils' personal development and their outcomes.

Governance

- The proprietor ensures that positive support and effective challenge are provided for senior leaders and staff. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths, informed in part by the very robust monitoring by the company's quality assurance manager of classroom practice and pupils' outcomes.
- The executive headteacher provides an external view of quality and helps to inform the proprietor's understanding of the day-to-day effectiveness of the school's work. The headteacher and staff receive continuous support with developments identified in the school improvement plan.

- The proprietor oversees effective arrangements for the appraisal and supervision of senior leaders and staff. All staff work to personal targets, agreed with the headteacher and related to the school's improvement priorities. They value the support and challenge received and recognise how these arrangements contribute to the progress made by pupils.
- The proprietor provides the resources required to enable all staff to receive appropriate training, for example updating safeguarding awareness and teaching skills. Members of staff also value the encouragement they receive to improve their qualifications and further their careers.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school maintains an up-to-date safeguarding policy, which takes full account of the latest government guidance. The policy is available to parents as a download from the school's website.
- All members of staff are regularly updated in safeguarding requirements, including awareness of the risks posed by child sexual exploitation, online grooming and radicalisation. Pupils are taught how to keep safe, to be aware of online risks and how they may report any concerns or anxieties.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils enjoy working in lessons. They respond positively to the verbal and written challenges provided by teachers. Their keen engagement in learning is strongly underpinned by mutual respect and trust between pupils and staff.
- Teachers' planning is carefully organised to ensure that there is sufficient time for new ideas to be introduced and for pupils to practise skills and to consolidate their learning. They use well-chosen, stimulating visual resources to help to focus pupils' attention.
- Pupils, for example, moved successfully from calculating the volume of simple cuboids to applying their skills to working with compound cuboids, in response to an amusing musical cartoon presentation. They quickly learned and applied the concept of centimetres cubed in their verbal and written answers.
- Pupils are keen to offer their ideas and to find out more. In a religious education lesson about theism, atheism and agnosticism, they raised several deep questions and recognised that there are often no simple commonly agreed answers.
- Teachers and teaching assistants carefully monitor the work of individual pupils. They intervene sensitively and ensure that time is not wasted through misunderstanding of ideas or tasks. They use the school's reward system effectively. Pupils state that they value the rewards available to them and are pleased when they achieve full points in a lesson.
- Pupils enjoy learning and using new vocabulary. In an English lesson, individuals confidently volunteered definitions of 'common, proper and abstract nouns' before moving on to identify and apply collective nouns. Similarly, in a science lesson, the most able pupils confidently explained endo- and exothermic reactions, based on earlier practical work.

- Staff provide good opportunities for pupils to ask questions and to offer their own ideas and answers. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in working alongside individual pupils to maintain their attention and to ensure that they make maximum use of the time available.
- Teachers develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through work in a variety of subjects. Pupils make good progress, particularly with the improvement of their reading and writing skills. They enjoy regular reading sessions which encourage all pupils to read for pleasure.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about the outdoor activities available through the curriculum. Individuals are proud of their achievements, for example in rock climbing and abseiling. They recognise how their personal confidence and willingness to try new experiences are extended through these successful activities.
- The headteacher has recently introduced new arrangements for assessing pupils' progress at regular intervals. Each pupil has clear targets for improved learning in each subject, based on agreed milestones. These present a suitable level of challenge for pupils taking account of their individual starting points.
- Pupils are provided with different tasks appropriate to their individual levels of knowledge and understanding. They regularly follow a common theme at distinct levels of difficulty. At times, the most able pupils do not progress to the higher levels of challenge quickly enough in a lesson.
- Occasionally, class discussion is a little rushed and is not fully developed. This results in part from discussion taking place while pupils are recording written answers. This particularly prevents the most able pupils from taking their oral ideas to a higher level.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Most pupils enter the school with negative previous experiences of education. School staff work very closely with pupils' parents and carers to gain an accurate understanding of each individual's personal barriers to successful learning.
- This close teamwork continues throughout each pupil's time at the school. Pupils quickly learn to trust their teachers and support workers. As a result, they develop confidence to try new experiences and learn how to build gradually on their successes.
- The school's therapist works closely with individual pupils enabling them to identify and address the sensitive emotional barriers to successful learning and self-esteem. Staff also benefit from working with the therapist to better understand how to assist individual pupils to gain emotional stability and maximise their learning.
- Pupils demonstrate a growing capacity to listen to and value the ideas of others, both adults and fellow pupils. In a religious education lesson, for example, they took an interest in beliefs and values expressed by others or held by members of major world religions.
- The school is a close community with a culture of mutual support. All adults who expressed a view about the school believe it is a safe environment in which risks are

managed appropriately and pupils learn how to keep safe. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and how to avoid risks.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are punctual to lessons and equipped for successful learning.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' involvement in lessons and are very successful at maintaining pupils' focus and concentration. Pupils behave appropriately during lessons. There is very little off-task or distracting behaviour. Pupils concentrate on completing tasks or contributing to discussion.
- Pupils are confident to ask questions and clarify their understanding. Staff intervene immediately and successfully to address occasional instances of unacceptable or derogatory language.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. There are no persistent absentees and almost no unauthorised absence. Pupils' willingness to attend and engage in learning shows an improvement on their experience in previous settings.
- Behaviour around the school site, including breaks and lunchtime, is good. Any minor quarrels or disagreements are quickly addressed by staff interventions. Pupils do not have concerns about bullying and school records show that this is not a problem.
- Staff, parents and carers have no concerns about pupils' behaviour. They recognise how pupils with complex personal histories learn how to form effective and trusting relationships.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress, mostly from low starting points, across the range of subjects and experiences provided. Pupils' emotional stability has an impact on their rates of progress. Steady improvements in learning are sometimes interrupted by periods of limited success.
- Pupils develop secure knowledge and enjoy using the technical language learned in lessons. They are proud to rehearse their knowledge of scientific symbols, the vocabulary of linguistic devices in English or the technical terminology for common and complex shapes in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities begin to close gaps in the previous learning. A small number of current key stage 3 pupils have gained success in entry-level awards, building their confidence as they work towards higher levels of external accreditation at key stage 4.
- Each pupil works towards challenging targets identified through careful analysis of the baseline tests completed on entry to the school. The headteacher and teaching staff ensure that pupils' progress towards meeting their targets is continuously monitored and they enter for the increasing range of well-considered external accreditations available in the school.
- Recently, there have been no pupils at key stage 4 and no entries for GCSE examinations.

The most recent leavers from Year 10 entered the school with attainment well below expectations for their age. A number achieved success at entry levels 2 and 3 in mathematics.

- Most pupils enjoy reading. Those with well-established reading skills are confident to read with fluency and expression during lessons. The most able pupils have secure oral skills and can organise and express their ideas confidently. Overall, pupils' speaking and listening skills are not as secure or well expressed as their reading and writing.
- All pupils make good progress with their reading and writing, often exceeding the targets set for them as their confidence increases. Staff monitor pupils' work effectively. In line with the school's policy, they provide pupils with clear written and oral advice about how they might improve their work. The work in pupils' books shows good attention to improvement of identified areas.
- Pupils' overall attainment remains mostly below that expected for their age. The most able pupils work progressively towards GCSE or alternative level 1 and 2 accreditations. However, there are occasions when their learning is not accelerated sufficiently at key stage 3.
- School records show how previous pupils have accessed and sustained college placements related to their chosen vocational pathways.

School details

Unique reference number	136168
DfE registration number	830/6038
Inspection number	10039189

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

Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Proprietor	Care Today
Chair	Sean Fitzpatrick
Headteacher	Stephanie Baker
Annual fees (day pupils)	£140,000
Telephone number	0129871931
Website	www.roachesschool.net
Email address	stephb@roachesschool.net
Date of previous inspection	11–12 November 2014

Information about this school

- Old Sams Farm Independent School is a small special school located on the borders of Staffordshire and Derbyshire. It provides full-time education for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. In addition, pupils often have other needs such as speech, language and communication difficulties, attention deficit and hyperactive disorders (ADHD).
- The school caters for pupils aged 11 to 16 years, all of whom are in the care of local authorities. The school is registered to admit up to five pupils, on either short or longer-term placements according to their individual needs. Many have been excluded from their previous schools or have had periods of time out of school.

- At the time of this inspection, there were five pupils on the school roll, aged 11 to 13 years, all of whom had been admitted at various times in the current school year. All pupils have an education, health and care plan or are awaiting assessment.
- The school is part of the Roaches Therapeutic Community which is owned and managed by the Care Today Parallel Parents company. Pupils from this school may transfer to other schools within the group, to access alternative courses or to have a broader community experience.
- The school was last inspected in November 2014.
- The school does not currently use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning, and scrutinised pupils' work in English, mathematics, science and religious education. Two of these lessons were jointly observed with the company's quality assurance manager.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, the company's quality assurance manager and executive headteacher, in addition to the on-site headteacher. He discussed all aspects of leadership and management and the implementation of school policies.
- The inspector held discussions with a sample of parents and carers, a representative of one placing authority, and with pupils. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. He also considered responses to an inspection questionnaire submitted by five members of staff.
- The inspector scrutinised several school policies, procedures and records to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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