

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 September 2022

Ann Stewart
Headteacher
Sutherland House School
Bath Street
Nottingham
Nottinghamshire
NG1 1DA

Dear Mrs Stewart

No formal designation inspection of Sutherland House School

Following my visit with Chris Stevens, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Julian Scholefield, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 July 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss your school.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for no formal designation (NFD) inspections. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and was concerned about leadership and management and pupils' well-being at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

We do not give graded judgements on NFD inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a section 5 inspection and will be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the NFD inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Inspectors met with you and other senior leaders. I met with the chair of trustees and chief executive officer of Autism East Midlands. I also met with a group of governors. I held a telephone discussion with the local authority designated officer (LADO) for safeguarding for Nottingham City Council. We spoke with pupils, and

members of the teaching and support staff teams. We visited lessons. We observed pupils during social times and arrival and departure times.

We reviewed a wide range of documents. These included school policies, risk assessments, pupils' personal support plans, and records relating to attendance, behaviour, restraint, first-aid, and health and safety. I reviewed a range of child protection records, including referrals to the LADO. I reviewed minutes of governors' meetings and reports from local authorities who commission pupils' places at the school.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership and management of the school is effective. Leaders and staff take positive actions to support pupils' well-being.

Context

Sutherland House is a non-maintained special school that caters for children and young people with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. It is managed by Autism East Midlands charitable trust with a local governing board. There are currently 61 pupils on roll, aged seven to 19 years. Almost all pupils are boys. All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is close to the national average. Just under half of pupils are of White British heritage. The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Currently, the chair of trustees is acting as interim chair of governors, pending the appointment of a new chair.

The school senior leadership team is being restructured. The new structure comprises headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and three senior teachers. Two positions are yet to be appointed. The headteacher has been in post for four years. The deputy headteacher was appointed in spring 2022.

Main Findings

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong, tangible safeguarding culture in the school. Leaders work as a coherent team to ensure that they respond quickly to any concerns. Detailed records show that leaders and staff act in the best interests of pupils. They liaise regularly and frequently with external agencies such as social care and the police when needed. Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils. Staff safeguarding training is extensive and up to date. Staff express confidence in the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about online safety, healthy relationships and how to recognise and respond to harmful sexual behaviour.

Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school. They can identify trusted staff, such as key workers, who can help them if they are worried or have any concerns. Staff quickly spot small changes that may indicate a wider concern about a pupils' welfare.

Leaders make sure that there are sufficiently high staffing levels to ensure pupils' safety, and that of staff.

Leaders and managers are highly person-centred. They prioritise pupils' safety and well-being. They have developed systems that put pupils' needs at the heart of the school. These include their approach to behaviour management and the personal development curriculum. Home-school communications are strong. Frequent emails and a daily home-school log enable parents and carers to have a clear picture of their children's experiences.

Those responsible for governance hold leaders to account. For example, the headteacher attends weekly trust meetings to review and discuss current issues. Senior leaders attend monthly trust 'lessons learned' meetings to support and challenge each other.

Governors ask challenging questions to hold leaders to account. The headteacher reports regularly to governors. These reports show a breakdown of key matters such as attendance, behaviour incidents and safeguarding concerns. Governors and trustees support leaders when dealing with serious safeguarding cases.

Pupils' behaviour is calm and purposeful. Pupils respond well to routines and expectations. Relationships between pupils and staff are supportive and caring. These positive relationships promote pupils' sense of well-being and safety. On the few occasions when pupils struggle to regulate their emotions, well-trained staff respond quickly and sensitively to provide appropriate support. The number of restraints needed to help pupils regulate their behaviour is reducing.

Leaders and staff promote pupils' personal development and well-being through the curriculum and a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, pupils learn about healthy lifestyles in assemblies. Some pupils visit local shops to buy ingredients for the cooking sessions in the 'teaching kitchen'. Pupils also experience community activities such as farm and stable visits. They work in the school's allotment and 'gaming academy', and they participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Well-planned opportunities are designed to support pupils on their steps towards adulthood.

Additional support

Officers from Autism East Midlands visit the school frequently. They support and challenge leaders effectively. This includes checks on the school's safeguarding arrangements. Commissioning local authorities carry out regular checks on the work of the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- The leadership team is currently being restructured. An assistant headteacher and a third senior teacher are yet to be appointed. Leaders should ensure that the restructure is fully implemented in order to build leadership capacity further and drive sustained school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Autism East Midlands, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Watkins
Her Majesty's Inspector