

# Inspection of Old Sams Farm Independent School

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

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Inspection dates: 16 to 18 September 2025

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**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Most pupils who attend this school have had adverse prior experiences of education. They join the school with poor attendance records, negative views towards learning and a history of risky behaviour. Pupils' attitudes are transformed while they are at Old Sams Farm. They thrive in the school's safe, nurturing environment. A combination of high expectations, clear routines and positive staff role models help pupils to re-engage successfully with education.

Pupils are prepared well for their next steps. Although they only attend the school for a relatively short period, pupils make good progress through the school's curriculum, closing many gaps in their learning. Pupils also achieve considerable personal growth at Old Sams Farm. Staff challenge any anti-social attitudes consistently. They promote respect and help pupils to consider the likely consequences of poor choices.

Pupils' behaviour improves while they are at Old Sams Farm. They benefit from the small class size and close relationships with staff. Pupils are motivated by the merits and tokens on offer for working hard and behaving well. They engage well in learning most of the time. Pupils feel supported and valued. They appreciate the care and guidance they receive.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that is well matched to their stage of learning. The school has designed its curriculum to give pupils the crucial knowledge that they have missed or not secured due to interruptions to their education. As a result, pupils' knowledge, skills and confidence improve quickly. Pupils' short stay at the school prepares them well to achieve positive outcomes at their next education setting. They recognise the progress that they make at Old Sams Farm and are proud of their successes.

The school is passionate about reading. Staff share their enthusiasm and passion for reading with pupils, promoting the importance of reading widely and often. Through the school's well-considered selection of novels, pupils experience a range of high-quality stories, as well as poetry and non-fiction. There are also fortnightly trips to the local library to expose pupils to an even greater range of books and to encourage lifelong reading habits. Pupils often have opportunities to read across the curriculum. They read to an adult every day to develop their fluency and comprehension.

Staff deliver the curriculum in a lively, engaging manner. They explain curriculum content clearly, relating new concepts to pupils' experiences and interests. Staff use questions skilfully to deepen pupils' understanding. They make effective use of quizzes to keep important knowledge fresh in pupils' minds. There is a sharp focus on language development across the curriculum. Staff deliberately build pupils' vocabulary by introducing ambitious new words and discussing their meaning. In

science, for example, staff model how to describe processes with technical accuracy, empowering pupils to do the same. However, at times, staff do not resolve pupils' misconceptions well enough. As a result, pupils sometimes repeat the same errors, particularly in their sentence construction.

The school works well with other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and get the care they require. When pupils join the school, there is a thorough induction process to ensure that the school quickly identifies and understands pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Individual education plans (IEPs) set out the targeted support for each pupil. However, the school's IEPs are not as impactful as they could be. The support detailed for some pupils is not precise enough and it is unclear how pupils will achieve success. Some pupils are unable to work on their IEP targets because they do not know what they are.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Staff model positive, polite and respectful behaviour. When pupils are negative or inappropriate, staff de-escalate tension skilfully and challenge unacceptable opinions.

Pupils have often missed significant amounts of schooling previously. At Old Sams Farm, all pupils attend highly. This is due to high expectations, consistent messages about the importance of education, close liaison between the school and other agencies, and a supportive, nurturing environment.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. Pupils learn a comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Staff make links to fundamental British values whenever possible, developing pupils' respect for people's differences and the rule of law. There is a wide range of enrichment experiences to broaden pupils' horizons, including visits to art exhibitions, museums and places of worship. Even though pupils are only on roll at Old Sams Farm for a short time, they receive appropriate careers guidance in readiness for their next steps. 'Preparation for Independent Living' lessons also help to equip pupils for adulthood.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They receive suitable training to meet pupils' needs. Staff appreciate the school's consideration for their workload and well-being.

The school is well led. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and its next steps. The proprietor ensures that the school consistently and securely meets all the independent school standards (the standards). Policies are implemented effectively, including those for safeguarding, health and safety and risk assessment. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- At times, staff do not identify or address pupils' mistakes well enough. As a result, some pupils repeat the same errors. For instance, pupils' written work often contains the same recurring errors in basic sentence formation. The school must ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills that they need to check pupils' learning closely and resolve any misconceptions swiftly.
- Some of the targeted support for pupils with SEND is not precise enough. As a result, the school does not close some of the gaps in pupils' learning as quickly as it could. The school should review its support for pupils with SEND, so that all pupils benefit from close support.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136168
<b>DfE registration number</b>	830/6038
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10391754
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	5
<b>Proprietor</b>	Sean Fitzpatrick
<b>Chair</b>	Matt Wilson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Diane Wood
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£53,200
<b>Telephone number</b>	01298 214568
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.roachesschool.net">www.roachesschool.net</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:dwood@caretodayparallelparents.net">dwood@caretodayparallelparents.net</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	4 and 5 October 2022

## Information about this school

- Old Sams Farm Independent School is an independent special school. The school is registered to provide full-time education for up to 5 pupils, aged between 11 and 16 years.
- The school is situated in the village of Quarnford, Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 0SN.
- The school is part of The Roaches School Network, a group of nine schools operated by Care Today/Parallel Parents Ltd. The owner of the company is the only member of the proprietor body. Governance of the school is overseen by a governing body.
- The headteacher of Old Sams Farm Independent School is also responsible for two other schools in The Roaches School Network.
- Pupils are placed at the school by several different local authorities. All pupils on roll are in the care of their respective local authority.
- All pupils on the school's roll are pupils with SEND. The school provides education for pupils who have social, emotional or mental health needs. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils have often missed large portions of their education previously.
- The school is registered to admit both boys and girls. At the time of the inspection, all the pupils on the school's roll were boys.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in October 2022.

## Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with staff, spoke with pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered pupils' learning in a range of other subjects.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documents, including a wide range of curriculum plans, a variety of policies and risk assessments, as well as documents relating to school improvement, safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and governance.
- To check the school's compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors considered relevant documents and reviewed the facilities at the school's site.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Shaun Carter, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Anderson

His Majesty's Inspector

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