

Sutherland House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134889
Local Authority	CITY OF NOTTINGHAM LA
Inspection number	298616
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Owen Gray
Headteacher	Ms Maria Allen
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001
School address	Sutherland Road Carlton Nottingham NG3 7AP
Telephone number	0115 9873375
Fax number	0115 9400483

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is provided by the Nottingham Regional Society for Adults and Children with Autism. The Director of Children's Services leads on strategic and partnership work as well as acting as an adviser and consultant to the school. The principal has responsibility for leadership, educational and care provision within the school.

The school accommodates up to 84 children with autism spectrum disorders at five sites, which are situated in and around Nottingham. Nearly all pupils are of White British background. Many present challenging behaviour and have severe learning difficulties.

At the Ravenshead site, there are four children in Reception year as well as pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. There are places for 30 pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 in Carlton. Westward, has places for 14 pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. Falcon House has 14 places for Key Stage 4 pupils and post 16 students. The Continuing Education Centre provides for up to 14 post-16 students.

The school aims to provide the highest quality specialist education which addresses the specific needs of autism as well as the individual needs pupils and their families. The school has links with many organisations extending its role of supporting adults and children with autism.

The school achieved the Healthy Schools Award (Gold) in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sutherland House School is outstanding. Its excellent standards of care and education have been achieved from very high aspirations and very clear direction in meeting the needs of pupils with autism. The strong commitment and professionalism of the governors and of every level of school leadership, have ensured that the resources and approaches best suited to dealing with autism are firmly in place and being used most effectively.

The school has built extensive partnerships. There is a strong partnership with parents, whose views of the school are extremely positive. Links with local schools, colleges and businesses provide pupils with many opportunities to learn beyond the classroom and positively in real-life situations. The school plays an active part in local support services and often takes a lead in local and regional initiatives linked with improving provision for adults and children with autism.

Through excellent leadership and management a substantial and multi-disciplinary staff group has developed the expertise and dedication that makes the school so effective. There is remarkable consistency in the sense of purpose and quality of provision across the school's five sites. Provision in the Foundation Stage is excellent despite the fact that planning needs to be even more securely linked to the Foundation Stage curriculum. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are comprehensive and systematic. The quality of teaching is closely observed and lessons are separately scrutinised to check how effectively the approach to autism supports the teaching of the curriculum. Speech and language and occupational therapists work very effectively alongside teachers and their assistants developing and refining techniques that help pupils learn and make progress. The curriculum is good and the opportunities for pupils to combat autism are exceptional. The planning for each subject is often extremely effective, particularly in literacy, numeracy, and personal, social and health education. However, planning of what is taught in a few subjects, namely history, geography and religious education has not been set out with sufficient detail to secure breadth.

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent, especially because communication is so effective and high expectations are clearly transmitted. As a result, pupils take an active part in learning, make considerable progress over time and achieve exceptionally well by the time they leave. The meticulous planning for their future means they are extremely well-prepared on leaving school. Pupils enjoy school thoroughly and their considerable rapport with staff contributes significantly. The support they receive for emotional well-being and their personal development is excellent. Pupils form positive relationships and their substantial self-confidence means they will happily engage in new experiences. The management of behaviour is a real strength, so pupils behave extremely well and act very safely. With strong encouragement from school, pupils adopt a healthy lifestyle and contribute in many ways in school and beyond.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Foundation Stage provision is exceptional and children in Reception year make outstanding progress. Their achievement is particularly strong in communication, language and literacy, and in personal and social development. Teaching and learning are excellent as a result of the detailed planning of each activity. Exceptional use is made of signs, symbols, pictures and photographs to engage children. Children take an active part in learning becoming self-aware and communicative. Staff are expert in supporting learning and have a very good knowledge

of what each child needs to learn next. While activities are superbly well managed in reducing the barriers to learning in autism, planning is not linked sufficiently enough to the Foundation Stage curriculum framework. Nevertheless, children make remarkable progress, sometimes in a very short time, in areas that autism makes particularly difficult such as in forming relationships and working purposefully with others.

What the school should do to improve further

- Complete the planning of what is taught in history, geography and religious education.
- Strengthen the link between the planning for activities in Reception year and the Foundation Stage curriculum framework.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The very effective work done by all staff in reducing barriers to learning means pupils are prepared exceptionally well to achieve. Pupils overcome many difficulties and develop considerable capacity to engage and participate. The effective use of symbols and signing by those with the severest learning difficulties means they communicate and cooperate very effectively. By responding to expectations, concentrating well and thinking constructively, all pupils persevere, solve problems and complete work. Throughout the school pupils make excellent progress, including post-16 students. Pupils achieve outstandingly in acquiring the knowledge and skills essential to their future well-being and in areas of creative, physical and social development. The very large majority meet or exceed the challenging targets identified from the close monitoring of their performance in lessons. Pupils make excellent progress in English, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). As a result, by the time they reach Key Stage 4 and finish their time in the Continuing Education Centre they have achieved Entry Level Certificates, doing particularly well in science. Pupils and students also gain good accreditation from the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network's Transitional Challenge and Youth Award Scheme as well as in Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development because of the school's exceptional provision. Of great importance is the huge strides they take in making friends, in their willingness to engage in new experiences and in working with others. High expectations for pupils to be as independent as possible and to cope with real-life demands means they contribute exceptionally well in school. Coping extremely well with frequent visits outside school to shops and other venues represents an outstanding contribution in the community. These all contribute to pupils' considerable enjoyment and this is reflected in their excellent level of attendance. Several parents remarked that while their children had been reluctant in the past to attend other schools they now live for school and are totally changed as a result. Equally important is that pupils manage their behaviour extremely well. They have a strong grasp of what is right and wrong in their actions. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good. Pupils learn about different religions, take part in music and other creative work. They are aware about healthy lifestyles and take good care in keeping safe because both form key parts of what they are very effectively supported in learning in reducing the impact of autism.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Staff have an extremely good rapport with pupils because of the detailed knowledge of their needs and the high level of support they provide. There is very positive encouragement for pupils to communicate and take part in lessons. Expectations are high. Visual aids, signing and symbols are used extremely effectively to encourage and enable communication and understanding. Music interaction, a well-established therapy, takes pupils well beyond expectations by creating high quality communication between adults and pupils listening and performing music together. Teachers and their assistants make very effective teams, which is the result of their high level of knowledge and skills in relation to autism. Moreover, the planning of lessons is detailed. This provides a sharp focus on the roles adults perform and on matching each pupil's work to his or her targets and capabilities. Speech and language and occupational therapists model very effectively the teaching of key skills in lessons. Planning and developing good practice are underpinned with a thorough assessment of pupils' progress. In the many instances of outstanding teaching, lessons succeed really well in combining approaches to autism with strategies for teaching subjects. Here, learning is made really enjoyable, exciting and challenging.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is exceptionally good in all the areas linked with meeting pupils' autism and learning difficulties. It is extremely well planned and sharply focused on supporting independence and capability to deal with future demands. Literacy and numeracy, PSHCE, emotional literacy, musical interaction and work related learning are all strengths. Although the curriculum contains all the subjects it should, the detail in planning some subjects is limited.

There is a good range of sports, music and arts, which many pupils enjoy. The partnership with parents means that opportunities extend successfully into pupils' homes. Social stories, for example, help pupils and their parents manage the many challenges both face daily. Excellent partnerships allow pupils to experience and deal with the challenges of the world of work. A good choice of accredited courses ensures that practical skills are developed that support transition to the next stage of education or training.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is exceptionally well focused on supporting pupils. Child protection arrangements, health and safety and risk assessments are all of high quality and ensure a secure, safe learning environment. All staff know the pupils' needs very well and work as a team around the pupils and their families. Detailed monitoring of pupils' progress is highly effective in making individual learning and behaviour programmes. Pupils' progress and targets are shared very well with families and the pupils themselves. This means pupils are challenged to do their very best. The school works extremely well with educational psychologists, medical and other specialists such as occupational therapists to ensure pupils have all the support they need.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school has built exceptional success on its very clear direction. Governors, the director and principal along with leaders throughout the school work together extremely well to achieve the school's aim. The school's success is reflected strongly in parents' very positive views, a great many of whom tell of how outstandingly they and their children are supported. An ambitious vision inspires all staff to achieve very high standards of care and education. There are many staff taking the lead in developing initiatives both in school and beyond. Partnerships in the community, with parents, schools and colleges are excellent as a result of the wide range of specialist support and training the schools provides. The school's five sites, which includes the Foundation Stage, are led and managed exceptionally well. Effective steps have been taken on improvement since the previous inspection. There has been good progress on adapting the National Curriculum, although this work has to be completed. So far curriculum planning has impacted positively on the quality of education and pupils' achievement. The school's self-evaluation is comprehensive and systematic. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation ensure the school maintains a close check on the effectiveness of all its provision. The analysis of data on pupils' performance has taken shape so that challenging targets are being set and close scrutiny of progress is being maintained. A strong culture of continual improvement is firmly established and the school has developed an excellent capacity for improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sutherland House School, Sutherland Road, Nottingham, NG3 7AP

Many thanks for your warm welcome during our recent visit to inspect your school. We really appreciated how well you coped with inspectors being in school and in your classrooms.

During the inspection we quickly found out you have an outstanding school because it is totally dedicated to, and has the expertise for, ensuring you will achieve as well as you possibly can. It was delightful to see how much you enjoy being at school.

We were very impressed by the way your school supports and encourages you. What we have seen, as a result, is how excellently you gain in self-confidence and the capacity to take part in everyday activities. We were extremely pleased to see that you are so well prepared for the time when you leave school.

Your teachers, their assistants and all of the specialists who help them are enormously committed to your success. Many of the lessons we saw were outstanding in how they help you learn and make progress.

Because your school is one of the best, there is very little we have asked the principal to do. Although there is much to praise about the curriculum and provision for children in Reception, we have said the planning of learning opportunities in the Foundation Stage and in some subject areas should be set out with more detail.

Once again, many thanks and we wish you all well for the future.

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector