

Inspection of a good school: Sutherland House School

Bath Street, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG1 1DA

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2023

Outcome

Sutherland House School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to Sutherland House School. Pupils say they are happy. Pupils enjoy their lessons. Pupils say that they trust the adults in the school to help them and keep them safe.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. Supporting pupils to communicate is central to the curriculum. Teachers do this in different ways, including by pictures and phonics. Pupils learn that their opinion and choices matter. Staff often use the interests of pupils to engage them in lessons, for example by looking at rockets in science or creating giant sweets in art.

Pupils behave well in the school. Pupils want to learn. Pupils understand the difference between unkind behaviour and behaviours rooted in their autism spectrum disorder. Staff in the school know exactly when pupils need help with their behaviour, consequently pupils are well supported. Pupils say there is little or no bullying in the school. Sometimes, pupils are able to control and design the classroom around them.

Pupils enjoy learning outside of lessons. The 'feel-good' Friday lessons include things like mindfulness and yoga. There are many different ways for pupils to experience the world. For example, outside visitors have brought in a range of exotic animals. Pupils go on trips to places such as Wollaton Park and Leicester Science Museum.

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

Learning to communicate is central to the work of the school. All pupils have an individual communication plan. Teachers work closely with speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. This ensures pupils learn to communicate and speak as best they can. Pupils who are ready to learn to read with phonics do so and are well taught. Recently, the school opened a new library. The library has a wide range of texts, including adapted classics such as the 'Day of the Triffids' and popular texts such as 'Heartstoppers'.

In some lessons, pupils have the opportunity to read longer pieces of texts. However, this approach is not always consistently applied.

The school has designed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Pupils learn the curriculum through one of three pathways. One pathway is for pupils who have not yet learned to speak. The other pathways lead to more formal learning. This means that pupils learn the same curriculum but its implementation meets the needs of the pupils. The curriculum includes subjects such as English, mathematics, science, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and well-being. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils build on what they have learned in previous lessons. Teachers ask pupils to recall what they have learned earlier. In some subjects, teachers break down knowledge into smaller steps for the pupils to learn. However, leaders have not always identified the precise knowledge that they want pupils to remember in all subjects. This means the needs of the pupils are not always well catered for. Pupils in key stage 4 and key stage 5 can study subjects which result in them gaining qualifications, including GCSE and functional skills.

The school uses different assessment processes depending on the needs of the pupils. In science, pupils look at pictures, or they have quizzes to help them remember what they have learned in previous lessons. Teachers give feedback to pupils in the classroom and in their books. Consequently, pupils know what to do to improve their work. The school uses an electronic assessment tool as well. However, it is not always consistently applied.

There is very little low-level disruption in classes. The adults in the school understand the needs of the pupils very well. They have the knowledge and expertise to manage challenging behaviour. They record carefully how the pupils behave and what actions adults take to calm the pupils down. Consequently, staff continuously learn from events and pupils are more precisely supported.

The curriculum promotes pupils' broader development well. The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils to enjoy. This includes dedicated lessons each week, trips, visits and drop-down days. However, the curriculum for some aspects of personal development has not been well enough thought through and planned.

Leaders engage well with staff. Leaders help staff manage workload effectively. Staff say that they are protected from workplace bullying. Leaders have adapted planning systems to address staff workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable, compassionate and tenacious.

Safeguarding is well led.

The school ensures that staff know how to identify potential signs of abuse. Staff report concerns and follow up action when necessary. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates.

The school works well with other agencies to safeguard pupils. The school challenges the work of other agencies when necessary and in an appropriate way.

The school takes care in how it recruits staff. When staff do not meet the school's expectations of keeping pupils safe, appropriate and timely action is taken.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified the precise knowledge that they want pupils to remember in all subjects. This means that it is harder for all pupils in all subjects to remember the most important knowledge. Leaders need to specify the precise, important knowledge that they want pupils to learn in all subjects.
- The curriculum for some aspects of personal development has not been well enough thought through and planned. This means that the provision for pupils does not help them be the best that they can be. Leaders should ensure that the opportunities for pupils' personal development are coherent and explicit.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2017.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	134889
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10254964
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	9
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Smith
Headteacher	Ann Stewart
Website	www.autismeastmidlands.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 to 21 July 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for the needs of those pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher, deputy headteacher, behaviour lead, designated safeguarding lead and special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, communication and English, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with

subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors spoke to staff, parents and pupils regarding safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors scrutinised training records and recruitment folders of staff as well as the single central record. Inspectors spoke to staff involved in the use of physical restraint, inspected restraint records and training records.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and staff regarding education, safeguarding, behaviour and well-being. Inspectors spoke to those with responsibility for governance.

Inspection team

Steven Barnes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Long

Ofsted Inspector

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