

Old Sams Farm Independent School

Old Sams Farm, Quarnford, Buxton, SK17 0SN

Inspection dates 11–12 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Excellent relationships between staff and students successfully turn around students' attitudes to school and their ambitions for the future.
- Students make good progress in literacy and particularly in their reading skills because these are well supported in English, in other subjects and in partnership with their carers.
- Good leadership from the headteacher has expanded the range of qualifications available to students and ensures that, however short their stay, they leave with improved and new skills that they can take forward to their next steps in education and life.
- The proprietor and area manager keep a careful eye on the students' achievements and are highly supportive of the new headteacher's determination to improve the school further.
- New systems for collecting and analysing information about students' achievement are used well by the leadership to tailor students' programmes and to hold teachers to account for students' progress.
- The art and design and outdoor education activities make a very strong contribution to students' well-being and are very well taught.
- Students' behaviour is good because they are so well supported to take responsibility for it and to think about how poor behaviour affects others.
- All staff are meticulous in providing for students' safety, including their emotional well-being, and this aspect of the school's work is outstanding. Students feel very safe and know their teachers want the best for them.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers make good use of information available about students' prior achievements when setting them tasks to do. This means that occasionally the work is too easy for some and too hard for others.
- Marking does not always make it clear to students what is good about their work and how they can improve it.
- Achievement in mathematics, though good overall from students' starting points, is more variable than in English. Students have fewer planned opportunities to practise a range of mathematical skills in other subjects.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at one day's notice.
- The inspector observed four lessons, three of which were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- She had discussions with the headteacher, with staff, the area manager and all students. The inspector looked at pupils' work and took account of the five staff questionnaires. There were too few responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) to analyse, although the school made available its own information about the satisfaction of placing authorities and student responses to the online questionnaire.
- The inspector examined a range of school documentation, including information about students' progress, and past and current students' achievement. The school's own evaluation of its work, students' work, records relating to attendance, risk assessments, behaviour, health and safety, and the school's procedures for ensuring the suitability of staff, were all scrutinised.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Old Sams Farm Independent School is a small special school located on the borders of Staffordshire and Derbyshire. It provides education for students who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). In addition to these difficulties, students often have other needs such as speech, language and communication difficulties, dyslexia, and attention deficit and hyperactive disorders (ADHD).
- The school caters for students aged 11 to 16 years, all of whom are in the care of local authorities. It has places for up to five students, and admits students on both short and longer term placements according to their needs. Many have been excluded from their previous schools or did not attend at all.
- At the time of this inspection, the students on the school's roll were aged between 12 and 14 years and almost all had been in the school for less than six months. All students have a statement of educational need or are awaiting assessment. Almost all students are white British, although individual students may have English as an additional language or have other heritages.
- The school was first registered in 2010 and is part of the Roaches Therapeutic Community. This is run by the Care Today Parallel Parents company. There is no proprietorial board. The company owns several children's homes and other independent schools within Derbyshire and Staffordshire. Students from this school transfer to other schools within the group, such as the Roaches Upper School, in order to access courses suitable for their level of ability, or to have a broader community experience.
- The school was last inspected in July 2011.
- The school does not currently receive any additional funding such as the pupil premium, although it has done so in the past. This is government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and accelerate progress further by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use the information that is held about students' current abilities to plan and adapt tasks, so that students have work that challenges them and is neither too easy or too difficult
 - students have more opportunities to develop and apply a range of mathematical skills in subjects so that their progress in mathematics is consistently good
 - teachers' marking of students' work consistently follows the school's marking policy and ensures that students are clear about what they have done that is good and how they can improve it further.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good because the proprietor, the area manager and the headteacher have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met and that the school continues to improve. They know the school's strengths and areas for development well and are determined that students will leave the school better equipped for their next steps. Their work to keep students safe is outstanding.
- The headteacher has improved the range of qualifications available so that every student who attends, unless it is for a very short time indeed, will leave with qualifications that make their future more secure. Students are excited by these qualifications and say they help them to believe in themselves more. They are now able to take a range of entry-level and GCSE qualifications. Past students have used these as a stepping stone to higher-level courses at college or at other schools within the Roaches Therapeutic Community.
- Information on how students are doing in the different subjects is gathered at least termly. This is used well by leaders to evaluate the success of the school's work and increasingly effectively by staff to tailor work more closely to students' needs.
- Good careers guidance is provided in conjunction with placing authorities and as part of the school's citizenship and personal, social and education programmes. This, plus work-related and college opportunities mean that students are well prepared for their next steps. Students say that the school helps them to believe in themselves and to be more ambitious about what they might do in the future.
- The school is drawing well on the company's staff, either as teachers within the school or as subject leaders and advisers, so that standards and the quality of teaching in the different subjects are improving. New staff speak highly of the ways in which such support has supported their teaching and their understanding of students' needs. Students' progress slowed last year when staffing was less stable. More recently the sharing of more experienced staff with other schools in the group, and the recruitment of additional highly committed staff, have accelerated progress so that students have made up any lost ground.
- Progress in reading and in writing has accelerated as a result of subject expertise in English, and the additional well-targeted support for students' reading and writing skills through booster sessions and in subjects other than English.
- The mathematics strategy is less well developed but has been clearly identified as an area for improvement. Although mathematical skills are supported, for example when thinking about where to place 'anchors' in climbing, these opportunities are not as carefully linked into students' current levels of achievement in mathematics as they are in English.
- The leadership has maintained good achievement and has ensured that the quality of teaching is now good. This is because the headteacher has ensured that schemes of work and records of work covered support new staff's planning and because staff training is prioritised. Almost all staff have good subject knowledge in the subjects they teach and all are expert at managing the behaviour and encouraging the learning of students with behavioural, social and emotional needs.
- A very strong personal, social and emotional education and citizenship programme, together with the school's therapeutic ethos, not only supports students' personal development very well but also ensures that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school ensures that all students have the resources and support they need to learn and that discrimination is not tolerated. It is quick to celebrate with students their diversity and is highly successful in re-engaging students with education because of the ways in which it works in partnership with other agencies and with the students' families and carers.
- School and residential staff are meticulous in ensuring that students are kept safe and that safeguarding

procedures are rigorously adhered to. Attendance is now excellent, and residential and school staff work extremely well together to ensure that students' behaviour and their understanding of how to keep safe are managed consistently well.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Although there is no proprietorial board the proprietor ensures that the school has the resources that it needs and that the headteacher and staff are held to account for its standards.

Staff are well supported by training and by the group's area staff to identify the school's strengths and to improve it further. This means staff are appropriately held to account for students' progress and their performance management and pay are closely related to this.

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all the independent schools regulations, that students are kept safe and that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students make considerable strides in the management of their own behaviour and in their personal development. This is because of the high expectations of staff and the consistency with which both residential and school staff manage any outbursts that might occur. Excellent transition arrangements mean that students settle in very quickly and, for some, the transformation in their behaviour and attitudes is remarkable.
- Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are increasingly rare as students settle into the school, but when they do happen other students continue to work effectively. Staff give clear messages to students as to what they need to do and what will happen. When students do misbehave or refuse to work it is usually quickly resolved. Residential staff help students to make up lost time by ensuring that they complete work after school. Students value and understand the reward system and say that it motivates them almost always to keep on task.
- Students arrive in school promptly and are quick to settle to work. This is because staff have established clear routines and expectations about work attitudes and behaviour. There are no exclusions and almost all students' attendance is close to or at 100 per cent. Excellent relationships between staff and students support this. Students say that they attend so well because of the individual attention they receive and because their teachers make the learning interesting so they are motivated to achieve more than previously.
- There is no bullying, although students say they do sometimes 'tease each other'. However they are clear that racist language and other discriminatory behaviour will not be tolerated and say that they are more able now to manage their own behaviour, including their language. They understand the importance of keeping healthy and value the many opportunities they have to be outdoors to help achieve this. Some students told the inspector that they had not really cooked before attending this school, but now feel that they could manage to look after themselves and eat healthily because of the cooking courses they have followed.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All staff are very well trained and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of students, including their emotional well-being. All the required arrangements to check on the suitability of staff are in place and meticulously adhered to. All staff have first aid training, and are trained to manage difficult behaviour.
- Students take part in a range of off-site activities, including climbing. The risk assessments and procedures for these are detailed and rigorous. Students are clear as to what they must do and how they must work together on these so that everyone is safe. These activities make a strong contribution to students' ability to take personal responsibility for their safety and to work together.

- The school's therapeutic ethos and close working with the residential staff ensure that if students are feeling particularly vulnerable this is taken into account and their programmes of learning adapted. Students say there is always someone to talk to, and that the school helps them to understand how to keep themselves safe and provides them with strategies for this.
- There is good attention to internet safety and students are clear as to the dangers of social media. They understand why access to the internet has to be restricted for vulnerable young people. The citizenship programme and the school's programme for supporting spiritual, moral, social and cultural development help students to understand and recognise extremist positions and discriminatory language and actions. This all keeps students safe and ensures too that they are not exposed to extremist views.
- Students display tolerance and respect for each other and are highly respectful of staff. They have a good understanding of different lifestyles and cultures because of the ways that the school and residence actively promote this understanding. A range of themes relating to different countries and religions, as well as celebration of students' home towns and countries, support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good because staff think carefully about the ways in which they can re-engage students with learning. Excellent relationships with students are founded on deep understanding of their needs and the challenges they have faced to date.
- Staff manage students' behaviour extremely well so that it rarely disrupts the learning of others. They have high expectations of students and make clear to students what they must achieve by the end of a lesson. However marking in students' books does not consistently make it clear to students what is good about their work and how to improve it further. This means that sometimes students make similar mistakes repeatedly, or do not improve their work as quickly as they could.
- Teaching is generally well matched to students' abilities, particularly when they are working by themselves. When students are taught as a group this is not always the case. For example in mathematics, students' achievements are wide ranging and in the starting activities students often have the same task to do. This means the more able finish quickly and lower-achieving students find the work too hard and learning for both groups of students is slower as a result.
- In other subjects such as art and design and physical or outdoor education, students learn well and take a great pride in their work. Teachers are experts in these subjects and use other available staff well to encourage students to achieve even more. In a design technology lesson, students worked extremely well at developing their designs for a cushion, researching their chosen design and identifying the different techniques that they could use. Their portfolios were testament to the care and pride they took in their work and to the outstanding teaching they receive over time.
- Similarly, in outdoor education students tried hard to remember key vocabulary to describe climbing equipment but also extended their skills in making and identifying knots as the teacher skilfully prepared them for their practical lesson outside. Mathematics and science skills were applied and promoted as students thought about the angles and the ways in which the anchors would respond to weight and forces. A strong balance of explanation and question probed and deepened their understanding of different equipment, its purpose and how to ensure that they kept safe.
- Teachers' strong relationships with students mean that students are prepared to have a go at work which they might previously have not enjoyed. One student, for example, explained that he now liked writing because he was making progress in it, whereas he would not even try before.
- Good leadership and specialist teaching in English, as well as whole staff training, mean that the teaching of reading and writing is now good. A particular strength is the way in which students' self-expression is promoted. Staff encourage students to think more deeply about the answers they give and provide good

opportunities in all subjects for students to extend their speaking, reading and writing skills.

- Students make at least expected progress in mathematics. However not as many make better than expected progress in this subject as in English and other subjects. Teachers do not make such good use of what is known about students' prior achievements in mathematics. The most able in particular are not always given difficult enough work in mathematics, or problems to solve in other subjects that would use their mathematical skills and take account of their higher ability.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students achieve well because of the individual attention they receive and because staff manage to turn around their attitudes to learning so well. Students generally arrive at the school with achievement that is low compared with others of their age. Often they are significantly underachieving because they have not attended school regularly for some time.
- Good achievement is founded on the highly positive relationships that staff swiftly establish with students and the ways in which they build students' confidence so that they are inspired to have ambitions for themselves.
- Students make particularly strong progress in their personal development and citizenship which contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is because the school and residence prioritise such development and are so well focused on ensuring that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Those students who attend the school for other than a very short time are enabled to achieve a range of qualifications that will help them to achieve even more at their next placement. They gain confidence in themselves as a learner as they take these qualifications, taking increasing pride in their work and achievement. The school is quick to identify any talents that students have and use their partnership with other schools in the group to ensure that students have access to the level of qualifications they are capable of achieving.
- For the first time last year students took and achieved GCSE qualifications in art and design, as well as entry level qualifications and GCSE equivalent courses in English, mathematics, science, and design and technology. They also achieved recognised qualifications in sports, leisure and climbing. Extension of the school's accredited awards means that students are on track to take a GCSE sports qualification this year. Others who stay for shorter times take unit awards in a range of subjects.
- Despite their lower starting points and lack of confidence in key skills such as reading, writing and mathematics on entry, students leave Old Sams Farm School having narrowed the attainment gaps in English and mathematics. This is because of the individual support they receive and the ways in which the school builds their confidence. More-able students often transfer to the school's sister school to take higher-level GCSE qualifications. For example, one student who had recently transferred at the time of the inspection was on course to achieve a range of GCSEs including English and mathematics, because of the intensive individual support he had received at Old Sams Farm School.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	136168
Inspection number	446246
DfE registration number	830/6038

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Dr Sean Fitzpatrick
Chair	n/a
Headteacher	Rakha Begum-Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	13-14 July 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40964
Telephone number	01298 71931
Fax number	n/a
Email address	rakha@roachesschool.net

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