

# Sutherland House School Braithwell

The Old Rectory, Holywell Lane, Braithwell, Doncaster, South Yorkshire  
S66 7AF

**Inspection date**

11 November 2025

**Overall outcome**

**The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(g) to 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2) and 3 to 4*

- The school has a written curriculum policy in place. This is supported by a range of detailed long- and short-term curriculum plans. These support teachers to know what pupils should learn and when, making links to previous learning. The school has worked in partnership with staff at the other school operated by the proprietor to ensure that the curriculum is of high quality.
- All pupils who attend the school will have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with autism as their primary area of need. Pupils will each have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has considered how it will gather information about pupils' starting points, as well as developing ongoing systems to assess pupils' achievement. The school will use the information that it gathers to place pupils on one of its two curriculum pathways, as appropriate to their needs.
- The school's curriculum is broad, covering a wide range of subjects. For example, pupils will study English, mathematics, science, art and design, music, physical education and humanities. Leaders intend that the curriculum will be adapted and personalised to the needs of individual pupils. The school's curriculum pays appropriate regard to pupils' needs and aptitudes.
- The school intends that pupils will study towards accredited qualifications, including functional skills, unit awards and GCSE qualifications, as appropriate. In key stage 5, pupils will continue with tailored qualifications and receive support from a transition team to move into college, work or supported living.
- Leaders intend that the school will have a qualified teacher leading each class, working alongside trained teaching assistants. It plans to have high adult-to-pupil ratios in order to support with pupils' needs and learning.
- All staff will complete a two-week induction programme overseen by the proprietor. This will be reinforced with a two-week work shadowing period. During this time, staff

will complete training on key features of the school, such as autism awareness and communication and language training.

- The school has mapped out the content of ongoing weekly professional learning sessions for staff. These will provide opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of teaching in the school. Extra training will be provided to staff in regard to pupils' individual needs, as required. The planned programme of training takes account of relevant education research.
- The school has developed a relationships, health and sex education policy that covers the requirements of current statutory guidance. It sets out clearly how the school will ensure that pupils in both the primary and secondary phases receive the education that they are entitled to. The policy outlines how the school intends to consult parents and carers about their child's learning in this area. It sets out the right of parents to request that their child is withdrawn from some, or all, of the sex education part of this curriculum. The policy recognises the requirement for the school to ensure that teaching resources used are appropriate to pupils' ages and their SEND.
- The school intends to include careers education within its personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils will receive independent careers advice and guidance from a qualified careers adviser. Leaders plan for this to run alongside a programme of personal development, providing pupils with wider opportunities, such as completing work experience placements.
- The school is likely to meet the independent school standards (the standards) in this part.

## Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

### *Paragraphs 5 to 5(d)(iii)*

- The school has developed its PSHE curriculum to provide pupils with a secure understanding of key topics, such as the fundamental British values and the protected characteristics. The school intends that its PSHE curriculum will be taught through weekly lessons. Regular assemblies are planned to reinforce pupils' learning from these lessons. The school intends that equality and diversity will be taught through carefully chosen texts, visits to places of worship and guest speakers. Teachers will use resources that promote discussion and debate in a respectful way.
- Leaders have planned a range of approaches to help pupils to gain practical experience of their learning in PSHE. For example, the school plans to have a student council to provide a model of democracy in action.
- Pupils will visit local farms and churches. They will be involved in community projects, as well as participating in events, like 'sing and sign', to support inclusion and cultural understanding. Leaders have a clear vision of how these events will be planned and how the school will engage with local groups to involve pupils in events.
- Leaders intend to enhance the quality of the school's personal development offer by working alongside the local community. For example, they have begun to form links with the local church and parish council, among others. The school has considered how visiting speakers can contribute to its offer. To ensure that pupils are protected from inappropriate content, including partisan views, the school will check on the materials used by all speakers in advance.

- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraphs 7 to 7(b) and 9 to 16(b)*

- Since its previous pre-registration inspection, the school has revised its behaviour management policy. This policy no longer makes reference to the use of chemical restraint. Leaders recognise that this would not be appropriate within an educational setting of this type. The policy is written with the school's intention to re-educate pupils when poor behaviour occurs at its core. It stresses the requirement for the school to teach pupils appropriate behaviours in different situations. The policy outlines a range of support that may be used to support pupils to behave well. This might include taking advice from therapists and external professionals, for example.
- The school has systems in place to enable it to record incidents of poor behaviour. These records will be reviewed regularly by the school's senior leadership and pastoral teams to identify patterns and opportunities to provide pupils with additional support. Learning from incidents of poor behaviour will be used to update pupils' individual behaviour support plans, as appropriate.
- School leaders have a secure knowledge of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. The designated safeguarding lead has completed training and qualifications appropriate to their role. Leaders have developed a safeguarding policy for the school. This has been updated since the school's previous pre-registration inspection. It takes account of current statutory guidance. New staff will complete appropriate induction and ongoing training to ensure that they understand how to implement the school's safeguarding policy effectively. This will include training on indicators of harm as well as on what to do should they be concerned about a pupil's welfare. Leaders are aware of the need to adjust training to ensure that staff understand how to safeguard pupils, taking into account pupils' individual needs.
- The school has developed an appropriate anti-bullying policy. It has considered how it will address and support any incidents of bullying that do occur. In addition, the school has integrated teaching about the unacceptable nature of bullying, and available support, within its PSHE curriculum.
- The school has established appropriate health and safety, first aid and administration of medicines policies. Staff will receive training on how to implement these effectively. Leaders have developed a range of suitable risk assessments that cover individual locations or activities. For example, these include mitigating risks associated with educational visits or enrichment activities, such as swimming.
- The school has contracted with an external company to complete a fire risk assessment. Leaders have responded to any recommendations within the risk assessment swiftly. For example, by installing additional fire doors, designing an evacuation plan and securing certificates regarding the installation of electrical equipment.
- The school has purchased a commercial management information system to support it in maintaining accurate admissions and attendance registers. Although there are not currently pupils on roll, the school has set up these systems in preparation for pupils

starting at the school. Leaders have ensured that systems for recording admissions, school leavers and pupil attendance meet the requirements of current regulations.

- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

#### Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

*Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c), 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21(5)(a)(ii) and 21(5)(c) to 21(7)(b)*

- Leaders have completed comprehensive training relating to safeguarding and recruitment. They have a clear understanding of safe recruitment processes. This supports them to ensure that all required pre-employment checks are completed before staff commence their employment.
- At the previous pre-registration visit, the school had not made required checks on individuals who had lived or worked overseas. Since that inspection, the school has completed this outstanding check, ensuring the suitability of adults who work in, or have responsibility for, the school.
- The school currently has a small number of employed staff. It plans to expand this number as it prepares to open to pupils. Leaders have completed all required checks on existing members of staff and the proprietor body. This includes ensuring that an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and prohibition checks are made, including checks under section 128 of the 2008 Act. The school understands the requirement to complete such checks in advance of staff commencing their employment. The school maintains a single central record of the checks completed.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(1)(c), 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2) and 25 to 29(1)(b)*

- The school is located in a recently refurbished rectory building. It sits in ample, well-maintained grounds. This provides suitable space for pupils to play and to study physical education. The proprietor has installed suitable fencing and exterior lighting to ensure that the grounds are safe and secure. The proprietor has established appropriate protocols to manage access to the site, addressing any potential risk posed by its shared driveway effectively.
- Within the site, there are a small number of areas that are not intended to be accessed by pupils at the current time. For example, the school has a garage that it has not yet refurbished. This is planned to be converted to additional teaching spaces in a later phase of the school's development. Leaders have ensured that these spaces are appropriately secure.
- The school buildings have been refurbished to a high standard. The school comprises six classrooms and a range of wider spaces, including a purpose-designed sensory room. All classrooms are finished in a similar style. They are decorated using calm colours and designs to minimise the risk of overstimulating pupils. The school has installed additional sound proofing to improve the acoustic conditions in the building. Each classroom is well resourced and suited to the needs of pupils who are planned to attend. For example, the school has installed interactive white boards in each classroom to support the teaching of the curriculum.

- The school has acted to address the unmet standards identified in its first pre-registration inspection. For example, the proprietor has installed an additional showering and changing facility for boys that replicates the facilities that were already in place for girls. As a result, these previously unmet standards are now likely to be met.
- The school has separate male and female pupil toilets as well as staff and accessible facilities. All toilets are lockable from the inside. Toilet facilities have adequate hot and cold washing facilities. Water temperature does not pose a scalding risk.
- The school has a medical room for the treatment of ill or injured pupils. This is adjoined to a toilet with a sink that is specific to the medical room. Within the medical room, there is a collapsible bed as well as facilities for the storage of medicines. This includes lockable storage for any controlled medicines. The school has installed well-stocked first-aid boxes in the medical room and in other locations around the school.
- The school has considered how to manage social times to make the best use of the available facilities. Leaders intend that pupils will eat lunch in staggered sittings to prevent overcrowding in the school hall.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f) to 32(2)(b) and 32(2)(b)(ii) to 32(4)(c)*

- The school is in the process of developing its website. It intends for this to be fully operational should the school be registered by the Department for Education (DfE) and allowed to open. Currently, much of the information required by this part of the standards is available through the website. For example, the school's updated safeguarding and behaviour policies can each be accessed, as can details about the school, its headteacher and the proprietor. However, there remain a number of documents which cannot.
- Leaders have developed all of the required policies to meet the requirements of the standards in this part. These are currently available on request or via the school's website. The school intends to publish all required documentation on its updated website if it is registered with the DfE.
- As the school does not currently have pupils on roll, it has not got information, such as that required about pupils' achievement, to share. Leaders understand the requirements to make this information available in due course. For example, the school has considered how it will be able to provide an account of income and expenditure connected with any pupils on roll whose place is commissioned by a local authority.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

#### Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

*Paragraphs 33 to 33(k)*

- The school has developed a complaints policy that meets the requirements of the standards. The policy is available to parents through the school's current website. The policy is clear and comprehensive.

- The policy provides for complaints to be raised on either an informal or a formal basis. It sets out the timelines within which the school will conclude any investigations and communicate findings to the complainant and, if relevant, the person complained about. If the complainant is not satisfied, there is provision for a complaint to proceed to a formal panel hearing. The school has ensured that the panel comprises at least three persons with no prior involvement in the complaint, one of whom is independent from the running of the school.
- The school has made appropriate arrangements for how it maintains records of any complaints. Additionally, the policy outlines that the school will make records of complaints available for inspection by the proprietor and inspectors.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

## Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

### *Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)*

- The proprietor, with the support of the charity's central team, have ensured that there are secure systems in place to monitor the performance of the school, including its compliance with the independent school standards. Leaders have reflected on the systems that were in place at the school's first pre-registration inspection. They have learned from this experience and have implemented more robust lines of accountability. More stringent checks to ensure that the school meets the standards consistently are now in place.
- The standards that were unmet at the school's first pre-registration inspection, such as those relating to pre-employment checks or the suitability of the school premises, have been addressed and are now likely to be met.
- The proprietor and charity central team staff are able to gather suitably detailed information about the performance of the school. The school is developing dashboards that report on a variety of important metrics, including pupils' attendance or incidents of poor behaviour. These, alongside frameworks such as 'pupil challenge days', where leaders review the impact of the curriculum and wider support for individual pupils, enable them to form a rounded view of the school's effectiveness.
- The proprietor has arranged for school leaders and those with a responsibility for governance to receive significant and ongoing training to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively. As a result, leaders have a stronger appreciation of the standards than previously. The proprietor is now better placed to seek assurance that these are being met and to challenge this when they are not. The school intends to make use of an external school improvement partner with suitable knowledge and expertise to provide additional scrutiny and assurance of its work.
- School leaders are beginning to benefit from opportunities to work alongside other leaders in the charity's other school. This is particularly evident in aspects such as the curriculum where some aspects have been aligned to minimise workload, provide economies of scale as well as opportunities for collaboration.
- The school is likely to meet the standards in this part.

## Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has a written accessibility plan in place. This can be accessed through its website. The proprietor has ensured that this meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.



## Proposed school details

Unique reference number	152185
DfE registration number	371/6020
Inspection number	10424302

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other Independent School
School status	Independent Special School
Proprietor	Autism East Midlands
Chair	Robert Woodford
Headteacher	Gill Fotheringham
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,225
Telephone number	0130 2203 675
Website	<a href="http://www.shsbraithwell.org.uk">www.shsbraithwell.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:braithwelladmin@aem.org.uk">braithwelladmin@aem.org.uk</a>

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	5 to 19	5 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	33	33

## Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	33	33
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	33	33
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	33	33
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	33	33

## Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	2	9
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0

## Information about this proposed school

- Sutherland House School is located at The Old Rectory, Holywell Lane, Braithwell, Doncaster, South Yorkshire S66 7AF.
- The proposed school will be one of two schools operated by Autism East Midlands.
- The school proposes to support pupils with SEND whose primary area of need is autism. The school intends that all pupils will have an EHC plan. It intends that their places will be commissioned by a local authority.
- The school intends that all pupils will be single registered at the school and will attend this school full time.
- The school will not have a religious character.
- Leaders do not currently intend to use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the registration authority, the DfE. The purpose of the inspection was to determine if the school is likely to meet the independent school standards prior to opening as a registered school. It was the school's second pre-registration inspection.
- The school's previous pre-registration inspection took place on 21 May 2025.
- The inspection was conducted with two days' notice.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the proprietor body and other trustees. They also met with the school's headteacher, senior teacher as well as the chief executive officer and director of children's services for of Autism East Midlands.
- Inspectors reviewed documents and policies associated with the independent school standards. The inspectors toured the premises, accompanied by the director of children's services for Autism East Midlands.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of Doncaster local authority.

## Inspection team

Thomas Wraith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Beaumont

His Majesty's Inspector

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