

Inspection of Aurora Brambles School

159 Longmeanygate, Midge Hall, Leyland, Lancashire PR26 7TB

Inspection dates:

26 to 28 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend this school have often had challenges and experienced trauma in their previous education settings. They gradually learn to trust the adults around them who accept them and value them for who they are. The school provides a safe and welcoming environment for all pupils. This makes pupils feel well cared for and happy in school.

The outdoor education opportunities that the pupils engage in allow them to learn to work together, solve problems and have fun. Pupils make weatherproof shelters in the school grounds. They learn about habitats and wildlife. Pupils also enjoy orienteering, fell-walking and climbing.

The school's ambition for pupils' achievement in some other subjects is not realised. The curriculum does not always help pupils to build on what they already know. This leads to pupils struggling to engage in learning and, consequently, some low-level disruption in classes.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Since the previous inspection, the school has ensured that all staff have received the training that they need to respond to and support pupils' sensory, social, emotional and mental health needs.

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

There has been a considerable turnover of staff since the previous inspection. This has slowed down the pace of improvement in school. The curriculum in some subjects is in the early stage of development. The school has not sufficiently considered the different ages and special educational needs and/or disabilities of the pupils when designing the curriculum. In addition, the school does not make effective use of assessment strategies to inform teaching. Some pupils have gaps and misconceptions in their knowledge that have not been picked up. This means that these pupils struggle to make sense of new learning. This impacts how well some pupils achieve.

There is not a culture of reading in the school. The school has allocated time for interventions to support reading. Staff have had training in the school's new reading programme. However, the resources and reading books needed for these sessions are not in place. Pupils who are struggling readers do not get the help that they need. This hinders these pupils' access to the wider curriculum. Furthermore, some older pupils who feel that they are competent readers are unsure why they are being taught phonics.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' behaviour in school has improved. Staff feel that the positive relationships that they have developed with pupils have been the catalyst for this improvement. Nevertheless, there is still some low-level disruption in lessons when the work is not well matched to pupils' needs.

The school has an overview of the programme that supports pupils' personal development. However, this programme is not as well thought through and connected as it could be to ensure pupils are well prepared for adulthood.

Pupils have weekly lessons where they have the opportunity to learn about life in modern Britain. They discuss some challenging topics such as sexuality and healthy relationships. They learn to listen to and respect other's opinions. They understand democracy. For example, pupils vote for school council members.

Pupils receive careers guidance from an independent adviser. Pupils in key stage 4 can undertake vocational courses. They are able to study horticulture or motor vehicle maintenance. Pupils can participate in military training and gain football skills with a local club. Some pupils gain qualifications as part of these courses. Pupils move on to a range of colleges and training providers when they leave school.

The proprietor body has provided support to the school. It has carried out visits to evaluate the work of the school. Despite these checks, the proprietor body has not ensured that the school meets the independent school standards (the standards). The proprietor body has not made sure that there are suitable curriculum plans and schemes of work in place. Added to this, there are weaknesses in teaching, including in the school's assessment systems. The proprietor body has appointed new leaders and staff. These leaders and staff have started to make the improvements that are needed to improve the school's effectiveness.

Staff who spoke with inspectors feel that the school has moved forward in the last year. They have faith in the school. Staff feel that leaders consider staff's well-being when making decisions. Staff appreciate the training and professional development they receive.

The school actively engages with parents and carers. It involves families in the life of the school. For example, the school recently held a charity family fun day that parents and members of the local community attended. Older pupils worked with younger pupils to manage a variety of stalls. Pupils were proud of the money that they raised for charities through this successful event.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- The curriculums in some subjects have not taken into account pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs. These curriculums are not planned and sequenced well to allow pupils to build their knowledge and skills over time. This hinders how well some pupils learn. Leaders should ensure that subject curriculums are coherently

planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for pupils' future learning and employment.

- The school does not make effective use of assessment strategies to check pupils' knowledge and understanding. Some pupils have gaps and misconceptions in their learning that are not addressed. Leaders should ensure that teachers routinely check how well pupils have learned and understood what has been taught before they move on to new learning.
- Pupils who are struggling readers have not had the support that they need to catch up with their peers. This impacts how well these pupils can access learning across the curriculum. The school should ensure that those pupils at the early stages of learning to read are enabled to become confident, accurate and fluent readers.
- The school's programme of personal development is not well thought out. This means that there are missed opportunities to give pupils the knowledge that they need to make decisions, build their character and develop personally. The school should develop a carefully considered programme that supports pupils' personal development.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that the standards for the quality of education and leadership and management of schools are met. Pupils do not benefit from a high-quality education. The proprietor body should provide effective challenge and support so that leaders fulfil their statutory responsibilities and improve the quality of education provided.

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

Unique reference number	136003
DfE registration number	888/6111
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10286422
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Proprietor	The Aurora Group
Chair	Pam Eyre
Principal	Sarah Gregory
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,958
Telephone number	01772 454826
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com
Email address	brs-reception@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 October 2021

Information about this school

- The school's previous inspection was 6 to 8 October 2021.
- The school operates from premises at 159 Longmeanygate, Midge Hall, Leyland, Lancashire, PR26 7TB.
- A new principal has been appointed. This principal acts as the principal at another school in the Aurora group, Aurora Woodlands School. The school has also recently appointed a new head of school.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, Asperger syndrome and social, emotional and mental health needs.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with a representative of the proprietor body, the principal, the chair of governors, the head of school and other senior leaders. Inspectors also met with the quality assurance director and the people's director from The Aurora Group.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and English, mathematics and outdoor education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at plans and spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some 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.

- An inspector made a tour of the premises. Inspectors also looked at a range of documentation and held discussions to check the school's compliance with the standards.
- Inspectors also considered the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils. Inspectors spoke to some parents, pupils and staff about the school.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Phill Walmsley

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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