

Inspection of Ivy Lane School

Ivy Lane, Wakefield WF1 4AZ

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 October 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a calm, nurturing environment. Pupils feel safe here. Staff make sure that pupils can communicate their needs and feelings. There are warm, respectful relationships. Pupils' complex special educational needs and/or disabilities are accommodated well.

Pupils learn to recognise their emotions and to manage their behaviour. Pupils behave well. Staff deal promptly with any inappropriate behaviour and/or bullying. Routines in and around the school are well established. Staff get to know pupils very well. Over time, pupils develop their confidence. They learn to interact with their peers effectively and engage in learning willingly.

The school offers a broad curriculum. Staff want the best for pupils. There are high expectations. Pupils learn in small groups and sometimes in one-to-one situations. Staff help pupils with sensory needs to learn in a way that is comfortable and meaningful to them. Pupils utilise various resources to communicate effectively. These include using pictures and symbols.

Pupils enjoy a suitable range of activities. These activities are thoughtfully designed. They help to broaden pupils' understanding of the world. Pupils develop their independence and prepare for adulthood well. They enjoy horse-riding, cooking, swimming and taking part in residential experiences. Older pupils benefit from visits within the community. Post-16 students enjoy work experience on a local farm.

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

The number of pupils has increased since the last inspection. Leaders are not complacent. They have reviewed and deliberately designed the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of pupils. They aspire for pupils to 'develop independence through learning in a school and a community environment that offers warmth, security and consistency'. The school is achieving these aims. Pupils, staff, parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

The curriculum for most subjects, including English and mathematics, is well sequenced across the school's seven learning phases. The knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn are identified clearly. Leaders continue to make further pertinent refinements to some subjects to ensure that they are equally well designed.

Pupils, including those in the post-16 provision, study a curriculum that is tailored to their individual requirements. Skilled staff support pupils to engage with learning. They make learning relevant. They link activities to pupils' interests. Pupils with limited verbal communication skills are supported well. Staff teach pupils how to use signing, digital devices and symbols to communicate.

The school carries out pre- and post-admission assessments of pupils. These contribute to pupils' individual learning plans (ILP). These plans identify targets for pupils in their different areas of need. The plans link closely to pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan). Therapists work with staff to ensure that pupils' EHC plans are carefully considered. However, the targets for learning detailed in pupils' ILPs lack precision. Some targets are too broad. They are not broken down into small enough steps. This leads to some variation in the effectiveness of teaching.

Pupils in the early stages of learning to read get the structured support they need. A suitable phonics programme is in place. It helps pupils to develop their knowledge of sounds and early reading skills. Staff regularly check the progress that pupils make. Staff make sure that the books pupils read match the sounds pupils know. Pupils read often. They experience a variety of different genres and texts. They enjoy listening to class stories. Pre-verbal pupils enjoy listening to songs, rhymes and sensory stories.

Pupils' personal development is a high priority in school. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum contains appropriate topics of learning. Pupils receive suitable relationships, sex and health education. They learn about potential risks to their safety and the importance of good mental health. Pupils experience activities both within the local community and more widely. They enjoy visits to the Houses of Parliament, theatre, places of worship and museums. They like taking part in the Wakefield rhubarb festival, the Young Voices concert and singing in the school's 'Makaton' choir.

The school provides pupils, including post-16 students, with appropriate careers information. They receive independent advice and guidance to help them to make informed choices about their next steps. They learn enterprise skills and financial management.

A new proprietor has recently taken ownership of the school. The proprietor brings a wealth of relevant expertise and experience to support the school well. Members of the proprietor body have quickly gained a comprehensive understanding of the school's context. They have ensured that all of the independent school standards continue to be met.

The proprietor has put in place suitable procedures and policies to ensure the health, welfare and safety of pupils. Robust systems help to check different aspects of the school's work. These include for health and safety, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. The school's website contains the necessary information. This includes an up-to-date safeguarding policy. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Staff feel proud to work at the school. They want the best for pupils. They speak about them with genuine affection. Staff feel that leaders are sympathetic to their workload and considerate of their well-being. They are eager to improve their

practice to share expertise with colleagues working in other similar schools owned by the proprietor.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Targets for learning identified in pupils' ILPs are often too ambiguous. This means that teaching does not consistently support pupils to meet their targets successfully. Leaders should ensure that pupils' ILPs contain specific and measurable targets that can be reinforced effectively by teachers across the curriculum.

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	148241
DfE registration number	384/6011
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10300172
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Beechkeys Limited
Chair	Sharon Pearson
Headteacher	Michael Walsh
Annual fees (day pupils)	£88,965
Telephone number	01924927280
Website	www.theauroragroup.co.uk/ivylane
Email address	IvyLaneSchool@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 October 2021

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils with autism and associated learning disabilities. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The previous standard inspection of the school took place in October 2021.
- A new proprietor owns the school, Beechkeys Limited. The new proprietor was appointed on Thursday 28 September 2023. The proprietor is a subsidiary of the Aurora Group which owns several specialist education schools and colleges as well as several residential care homes across England.
- The proprietor has appointed a new governing body.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in 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 held meetings with the headteacher, the senior teacher, two behaviour therapists, the leader for post-16 provision, the chair of the proprietor body, the proprietor's quality assurance director and operations director, who is also the chair of governors. Inspectors also met with some members of staff and some pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into English, mathematics, physical education (PE) and PSHE. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teaching and support staff and spoke to some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work, some ILPs and some EHC plans.
- The lead inspector spoke to leaders about the curriculum in science and information technology.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and staff about the school's approach to safeguarding pupils in school. Inspectors checked the single central record and reviewed records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures. Inspectors checked the

implementation of risk assessment and health and safety policies, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents and carers, pupils and staff. Inspectors also spoke with some parents at the end of the school day.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils to 40.

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**
- During the inspection, the proprietor applied to the DfE for the material change to consider increasing the maximum number of pupils from 27 to 40 pupils.
- The school's premises are spacious. There is sufficient outdoor space to accommodate additional pupils at breaktimes. The inside hall is appropriate for sporting activities, including PE lessons. Classrooms and other areas of the school are of adequate size for staff to manage the increase in pupil numbers to 40.
- The school has suitable toilet and washing facilities. The proprietor completes relevant health and safety checks to ensure the welfare and safety of pupils. First-aid and medical equipment are kept up to date, and staff are trained to administer emergency care to pupils.
- The proprietor has ensured that safer recruitment checks are carried out on all adults who work with children. Suitable arrangements are in place to supervise pupils. Pupils enjoy high levels of adult supervision. The school intends to operate the same high ratios of staff to pupils if the material change is approved.
- The school's policies and procedures are compliant with the independent school standards. These include for safeguarding, admissions and complaints. There are appropriate schemes of work in place.
- The school has a deep understanding of the needs of pupils. The proprietor proposes to ensure that staff receive regular and pertinent training and support to ensure that pupils are kept safe and their needs met well.

Information about the material change inspection.

- Inspectors scrutinised the school's policies and procedures that were relevant to the proposed material change. They toured the school to check its suitability to accommodate the additional number of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and members of the proprietor body about their plans for the proposed change.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alex Thorp

His Majesty's Inspector

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