

Aurora White House School

Quidenham, Norwich, Norfolk NR16 2NZ

Inspection date

18 April 2024

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(h), 4

- The aim of the material change is to offer a bespoke curriculum at secondary age for a small number of pupils with more complex cognitive needs. Most pupils will continue to go to Aurora Eccles School. This is the secondary-age special school on the same site. However, leaders have established that some pupils will be better served by a more precisely adapted curriculum. These have increased communication and interaction needs. For these pupils, it will become an all-through school.
- The school has planned a broad and rich curriculum. This is likely to meet the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of the pupils who are the target of the material change. The curriculum for key stages 3 and 4 is well-designed with clear and ambitious endpoints. Intended learning is broken down so that it can be built up over time. The school has precisely identified the knowledge and skills to be taught and assessed.
- The school ensures education, health and care (EHC) plans are at the heart of curriculum planning. Parents and staff communicate frequently and collaboratively about pupils' progress and their outcomes. Pupil targets and strategies are regularly reviewed. The curriculum is further adapted in response. Leaders' rationale is for pupils to continue the balance of structure and nurture from which they currently benefit.

Paragraph 3 to 3(j)

- Teachers and staff have the knowledge they need for the material change. They currently adapt the curriculum skilfully so that pupils understand it. Teachers holistically pull together knowledge acquisition, pastoral aims, and EHC plan objectives. They do this in a way that helps pupils learn and grow. There is a framework in place for staff to assess pupils' work frequently and thoroughly.
- Reading is prioritised. The 'World through a Book' approach builds learning coherently and creatively on class texts. Pupils enjoy reading. They point out that a benefit of the proposed all-through school is that more older pupils can read to younger ones.

Where secondary age pupils are in the early stage of reading, they are likely to get the help they need.

Paragraph 2(2)(e) to 2(2)(e)(iii)

- The school has a well-considered plan to ensure that pupils receive a strong careers education. It intends to provide work experience in key stage 4. Much of this may be on site. Pupils will receive independent advice from a careers professional. There will be regular exposure to providers and employers, such as at open events. The school will use the Gatsby Benchmarks as a framework and monitor its progress with these. This will help pupils make informed choices about their next steps.
- The school is likely to continue to meet these independent school standards (the standards) and requirements if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

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

Paragraphs 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(i), 2A(1) to 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2), 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The school has a suitable plan for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). The programme will teach the necessary content. Important learning, such as about fundamental British values, is at present taught with breadth and depth.
- Pupils currently learn about democracy both through PSHE and through the life of the school. They voice confident opinions about how to improve the school. For instance, pupils requested the new 'buddy benches'. The reading curriculum helps pupils understand those from different contexts to themselves. This acts as a bulwark against radical ideas. Pupils are taught about the protected characteristics, and voice tolerant views. This suggests that a secondary-age personal development programme will be effective and delivered well.
- The school understands how to adapt relationships and sex education for older pupils. Leaders are attuned to potential issues that may arise, given pupils' varying needs. For example, staff will teach specific vocabulary so pupils can access the learning. The school plans to liaise closely with outside agencies. For instance, vulnerable pupils may need support with sensitive or potentially traumatic content.
- The school is a calm and well-structured place. Pupils are safe and happy. Behaviour for learning is positive, and any issues get well dealt with appropriately. The school believes that personal development will be better if pupils stay in this environment for longer.
- The school is likely to continue to meet the standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 32(1) to 32(1)(c)

- There is an up-to-date safeguarding policy for parents and carers to download on the school's website.
- There remains a watchful safeguarding culture. The safeguarding team is knowledgeable. They have long-term experience of working with similar pupils to

those who are the focus of the material change. Leaders understand the specific risks for SEND pupils in the 11 to 16 age range. For instance, they are very aware of pupils who are vulnerable to extremism. Leaders communicate closely with 'Prevent' duty. They ensure they take every step they can to mitigate risks. For instance, they use monitoring software vigilantly. The school uses restraint minimally and appropriately.

- Appropriate vetting checks are made on new and current staff. For example, necessary leadership checks are completed on middle leaders, as well as senior ones. Prohibition checks are made on all who engage in teaching activity, not solely teachers.
- The school is likely to continue to meet the standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- Leaders have a strong vision for the quality of education. There is a clear and appropriate rationale for the material change. This has been developed and reviewed over time. The proprietor body has the expertise to support the change. The shared leadership with Aurora Eccles School enhances the capacity for staff training. This means knowledge and resources for secondary-age provision can be shared.
- There is robust oversight of the school. The local governing board and the proprietor body provide challenge where needed. Consequently, the quality of provision is maintained and developed over time. Leaders and the proprietor ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently.
- Parents of the pupils who are the target of the material change are very positive about the proposal. The removal of transition to secondary school will support them and their children. Parents' view is that the provision is working really well so it makes strong sense to extend it.
- Norfolk local authority, the main commissioner of places, is also supportive. The local authority sees the school as improved, and as a provision that causes no concerns.
- The school is likely to continue to meet the standards in this part if the school receives approval for the implementation of the material change.

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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	148360
DfE registration number	926/6031
Inspection number	10333216

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	The Aurora Group
Chair	Phil Jonas
Headteacher	David Clarke
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,085
Telephone number	01953 887 217
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com
Email address	whitehouseschool@the-aurora-group.com
Dates of previous standard inspection	11 to 13 October 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	5 to 11	5 to 16	5 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	61 (80 capacity)	80	80

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	80	80
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	80	80
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	80	80
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	80	80

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	15.6	18.6
Number of part-time teaching staff	6	6
Number of staff in the welfare provision	42.2	50

Information about this school

- The school is registered as an independent special school to admit up to 80 pupils with SEND, between the ages of five and 11.
- The school was formed in June 2021 out of a reorganisation of the Aurora Eccles School on the same site, which had been previously registered to provide education from age three to 19. Since 2021, the Aurora White House School has occupied a separate primary site within the larger Aurora Eccles School site.
- Many of the school leaders work across both the Aurora White House School and The Aurora Eccles school.
- There is currently building work on site. This will be finished by September 2025. The site, however, already has capacity for the proposed material change.

- Pupils at the White House School access some facilities shared with Aurora Eccles School, such as the swimming pool.
- All pupils have an EHC plan and are funded by the local authority.
- The school caters for a range of needs, including attention deficit hyperactive disorder, autism, moderate learning difficulties, and speech, language and communication needs.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- Inspection history:
 - Ofsted conducted a pre-registration inspection of the school in May 2021.
 - The school received its first full standard inspection in October 2022. The inspection judged that the school's overall effectiveness was good. The school met the independent school standards.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to consider the school's request for a material change. The proprietor body requested to increase the age range from five to 11 to five to 16. They wish to put this in place from September 2024.
- The purpose of the inspection was to establish whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the registration authority were to grant the requested material change.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the site principal and other school leaders. A meeting was held with the chair of the proprietor body and the chair of governors. The inspector spoke by phone with a representative of Norfolk local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised the information and policies that are published on the school website. He reviewed a range of additional documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and minutes of governors' meetings.
- The inspector reviewed the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils and staff. He looked at the school's single central record of the checks that leaders carry out before staff are employed to work at the school.
- The inspector visited a number of lessons, talked to a group of pupils, and talked to pupils and staff at breaktimes. He phoned parents to discuss their view of the school and the need for the material change.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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