

Aurora Vincent House School

Vincent House, 31 North Parade, Horsham RH12 2DP

Inspection date

23 July 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(2)(h) to 4

- There is a written curriculum policy in place which sets out the school's intention to take a neuro-informed and affirmative approach to educating pupils. The policy places a high priority on pupils' personal development, including preparing pupils for adulthood through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, careers education and learning about how to be independent. Pupils will be expected to develop an understanding of fundamental British values, equalities and life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum is likely to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school intends to provide education for pupils with autism. They may also have associated social and communication difficulties, in particular high levels of anxiety. The proposed school intends that trained clinicians will work with teachers and support assistants to adapt the content of the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs and interests. Education, health and care (EHC) plans will form a central part of planning for each pupil.
- Leaders intend that the range of subjects that pupils will learn are likely to support them to acquire speaking, listening, numeracy and literacy skills. Subjects include English, mathematics, science, PSHE, relationship and sex education (RSE), humanities, art and design, physical education, computing, food technology, music, religious education, enrichment and careers.
- The proprietor body intends to initially provide education for pupils in Years 7 to 11. However, there are curriculum plans and associated schemes of work in place should the school broaden its intake to include pupils from Year 1 to 6.
- Leaders intend that the sixth-form provision will be an extension of key stage 4 to allow pupils, who need it, more time to be ready for their next stages of education or employment.

- Schemes of work are logically sequenced to build pupils' knowledge over time. Leaders understand the importance of assessing pupils' gaps in knowledge and adapting subsequent learning to fill those gaps.
- The proposed school intends for reading to have a high profile. The school has a phonics scheme in place for pupils in key stage 1. Older pupils with gaps in their phonics knowledge will be taught through a commercial catch-up programme. The school has purchased a range of high-quality books designed to help pupils with dyslexia gain a love of reading.
- Leaders intend to match the ambition of the curriculum to pupils' abilities and SEND. The school intends to offer a range of qualifications, including AQA unit awards, entry level, functional skills and GCSE qualifications.
- The school intends to open with approximately 20 pupils initially and increase to a maximum of 72 over time. The school intends that pupils will be taught in groups of no more than eight. Groups will be primarily age-based but there may be some mixed-age groups based on pupils' needs. Should there be a mixed-age class, the age range will be limited and suitable risk assessments considered.
- The school intends that each class will be staffed by a teacher and two teaching assistants. Teachers will hold qualified teacher status and will be supported by two qualified special educational needs coordinators. Staff will receive weekly training in the school's expectations, including training in behaviour management, SEND, curriculum adaptation and how to ensure positive communication with pupils. Teachers will be supported in how to deliver the curriculum by leaders.
- The school intends to employ trained therapists to support the delivery of any therapy noted on pupils' EHC plans. These are likely to include clinical psychotherapy, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy.
- The curriculum is well resourced. Some subjects, such as mathematics, will use commercial schemes of work. The science laboratory and food technology rooms are designed to a high specification.
- Leaders plan for adults to use positive reinforcement to manage pupils' behaviour. Clear plans and policies exist. Classrooms are laid out so that pupils can work together but also have space to work alone or in a way that suits their SEND needs. Rooms have been designed to be low arousal, calm spaces. All this is intended to support pupils to behave well.
- There is an appropriate RSE policy. The school intends to follow requirements by consulting with parents and carers on what is taught. Staff will pay particular attention to any adaptations needed to the provision based on pupils' SEND.
- The requirements of this part are likely to be met.

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

Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- Leaders intend that all parts of the curriculum will support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They intend to teach pupils to 'be curious rather than judgemental'.

- Leaders intend that the PSHE curriculum will support pupils' understanding of the world and their place in it. Pupils will learn to understand themselves, including how to maintain good physical and mental health.
- Leaders intend to promote fundamental British values. Pupils' understanding of mutual respect and the rule of law will be reinforced through the behaviour management system, which will focus on natural consequences to actions. Democratic principles will be used when choosing from multiple options, including choosing members of the student council. Older pupils will be taught about elections and voting. Religious education will promote mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths.
- Leaders have created an annual schedule of themes that will celebrate different aspects of life in modern Britain and the wider world, including different religious festivals. Leaders plan to help pupils understand current events in an age- and SEND-appropriate way.
- The school intends that pupils will learn about public institutions by listening to guest speakers and visiting places such as fire stations and the police station. They aim to help pupils with SEND know how to access them, and to minimise any anxieties they may have about using them.
- Leaders understand the requirement to ensure that partisan political views are not promoted.
- The requirements of this part are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7 to 7(b)

- There is an up-to-date safeguarding policy which references the most recent statutory guidance. Leaders have clearly considered the context of pupils with SEND and the additional vigilance required by staff when considering pupils' potential vulnerabilities. There is clear guidance on the types of abuse and indicators of abuse that staff should be aware of. Whistle-blowing procedures are equally clear.
- The headteacher will act as the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The deputy headteacher is to be the first deputy DSL. These leaders have an appropriate level of training and display a strong knowledge of safeguarding requirements. The proprietor body intends that there will be several, similarly trained, deputy DSLs in the school as it grows.
- Leaders intend to provide staff with the relevant safeguarding training at induction. The proprietor body intends for staff to use daily briefings to discuss safeguarding approaches. A weekly staff training slot will include extra training and checking on staff safeguarding knowledge. All staff will be trained in the 'Prevent' duty.
- Safeguarding records are to be kept securely using an electronic system. Staff are to be expected to talk directly to the DSLs when they have any concerns about a child and then record that concern on the school's electronic system. The expectation is that the DSLs will triage the concern within two hours. Strategic leaders from the Aurora group will provide an additional layer of advice and will check that actions taken are appropriate and timely.

- The proprietor body and leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to follow the statutory requirements outlined in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. For example, by referring concerns to the appropriate external agency. Leaders display an understanding of local thresholds. The proprietor body has provided additional training on this.
- The single central record is up to date and accurate.
- The chair of the proprietor body understands their safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders demonstrate an understanding of safer recruitment procedures, including the need to report concerns about adults to the local authority designated officer and disclosure and barring service.

Paragraphs 9 to 10

- There are clear behaviour and anti-bullying policies which reflect an understanding of pupils' SEND. Leaders intend to take an affirmative approach to managing pupils' behaviour which will include de-escalation of issues, the use of structured choices approach and opportunities for pupils and staff to reflect when issues arise. Leaders intend to use a 'natural consequences' approach to help pupils to understand the impact of their actions on themselves and others.
- Leaders demonstrate a strong understanding of how to support the behaviour of pupils with SEND. This is likely to be a strong aspect of the provision. Pupils will have behaviour support plans that will be created using stakeholder input, including pupil, parent and staff views and supported by the expertise of the school's employed clinicians.
- The school intends for the use of suspension or exclusion to be rare. However, there is appropriate provision for serious incidents, set out in the policy.
- Leaders do not intend to use restrictive physical intervention. However, there is appropriate provision for this set out in the policy, should a pupil endanger the health or safety of another. Leaders are experienced in a well-known de-escalation approach and intend to train others in the school in the approach.

Paragraphs 11 to 12

- There is a health and safety policy in place which complies with relevant health and safety legislation. Similarly, the proprietor body ensures that fire safety requirements are met. Leaders use the trained health and safety team employed by the Aurora group to carry out required health and safety checks and to keep the site in a high state of repair. In addition, external professionals are used when necessary. These are also commissioned to provide annual compliance and safety checks. A tour of the site showed that fire-safety equipment such as extinguishers, safety lighting, smoke detectors and fire doors are in place. Pupils and staff will practise evacuation and lockdown procedures regularly.

Paragraphs 13 to 16(b)

- There is a suitable first-aid policy, equipment and trained first aiders in place. There is a well-stocked medical room for pupils who are sick or injured. The headteacher is knowledgeable and experienced in first aid. Leaders are clear on the system of proper administration of medication.

- The proposed staffing structure and organisation of the day means that pupils are likely to be properly supervised. This includes having a rota for the use of the dinner hall and staff timetabled to supervise break and lunch times.
- The school uses an electronic system to record admissions and attendance. Records contain the required information about pupils' personal details and circumstances. Leaders demonstrate an understanding of how to record attendance in line with legal requirements, including the use of the C2 code for pupils who are placed on a part-time timetable as part of their transition into school.
- Leaders demonstrate an understanding of the procedures to follow should a pupil not attend school, including where pupils are vulnerable because of their age and SEND. Leaders have thought about how to ensure that agencies will support with checks on pupils' whereabouts should a child live a long distance from the school.
- There is a risk assessment policy in place for the site and another for pupils. Both policies identify likely risks and plans to mitigate these. In addition, leaders intend that individual pupils will have written risk assessments. There are also numerous risk assessments in place for trips, visits and other activities both on and offsite.
- The requirements of this part are likely to be met.

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) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c) to 21(6)

- Leaders are knowledgeable and trained in safer recruitment requirements. The Aurora group human resources team organises the required checks well. Leaders understand the checks necessary on all adults who work in the school. This includes staff, supply staff, leaders, members of the proprietor body and any contractors. Leaders understand the need to check and accompany any visitors.
- There is a single central record in place showing that the required employment checks have been made. These include identity and medical checks.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2) to 29(1)(b)

- The proposed school is located in a large, two-storey building which has been refurbished to a high standard to be suitable as a school. Inside, the site is clean, very well maintained and fit for purpose. The paint colours and layout have been purposefully chosen to create a low-arousal, calm space for pupils with SEND to learn. Internal and external lighting, and internal acoustics are appropriate for a school. There is heating throughout.
- Outside, there is plenty of space for pupils to play, including on the large multi-use games area. Next to this is a grass area which contains equipment for pupils climb and swing on and picnic-style tables and benches for quieter recreation. The driveway and car park are separated from the school site by fencing to protect pupils. The

whole site is protected through high fencing, gates or walls so that it is secure. Entrance to the site and the school building is through an electronic entrance system.

- There are suitable classroom spaces for pupils to learn in small groups. There is different-sized classroom furniture to suit the different age ranges that the school intends to cater for. There are well-equipped rooms for art, science, food technology and a sensory room. In addition, there are spaces for therapy, offices and an additional kitchen that may in the future become a sixth-form common room.
- Adequate, labelled drinking water is available from machines situated around the school. There are numerous, separate toilets and washing facilities for staff and pupils. Hot and cold-water supplies are maintained at suitable temperatures and labelled appropriately. There are showers and changing spaces in individual cubicles for pupils to use.
- There is a well-equipped medical room for use when required. It contains a bed and a sink and is opposite a toilet. It is likely to meet the necessary requirements.
- It is likely that the requirements of this part will be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1) to 32(1)(d), 32(1)(f)–32(2)(b), 32(2)(b)(ii) to 32(4)(c)

- The proprietor body and leaders are familiar with information that the school will be required to publish on its website and make available to parents and carers. This includes the requirement to publish inspection reports, and to produce an annual written report for parents. In addition, the school intends to provide termly information to parents on pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proprietor body is also aware of the requirement to provide specified information to local authorities. Leaders have experience of communicating with local authorities, including when there are safeguarding concerns and to ensure appropriate provision for children with SEND.
- The proprietor body intends that some policies will be available to parents through the website and others on request from the school. These policies are in place and ready to be published upon registration. The website contains the contact details of the school and the proprietor.
- The requirements of this part are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33 to 33(k)

- There is a written complaints policy in place. It is compliant with the requirements of this part. The policy sets out clear timescales for the management of a complaint, provides for informal complaints to be escalated to the formal stage, and for a panel of three people to hear complaints, one of which must not be associated with the management of the school. Leaders are aware that this should not be anyone who otherwise works closely with or is employed by the proprietor body.

- The school is not yet operating and therefore there have been no complaints made against the school in the last academic year. Leaders understand the requirement to publish this information.
- The school is likely to meet the requirements of this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proposed school's senior leaders are experienced in education, SEND, safeguarding and school leadership. They display secure knowledge of SEND provision, and of the requirements of the independent school standards. They demonstrate a strong moral purpose and commitment to providing education and care for pupils with SEND, with safeguarding at the heart of their work.
- The proprietor body runs a number of similar schools. It has increased the number of schools in the group in the last few years. All its schools that have been inspected currently meet the independent school standards.
- The school will be overseen by a number of strategic directors who are employed by the Aurora group to act as professional governance for the school. These include people with experience in education, health, care and safeguarding. They have set out a suitable programme for monitoring the curriculum, behaviour, safeguarding and wellbeing. They intend to visit the school regularly and provide challenge and support to leaders.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- There is a suitable accessibility plan that sets out appropriate steps to ensure that pupils who are disabled have access to information, the curriculum and the physical environment.

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	151749
DfE registration number	938/6022
Inspection number	10396804

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 special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Beechkeys Limited
Chair	Sharon Pearson
Headteacher	Robert Walton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,000
Telephone number	01403 337500
Website	www.theauroragroup.co.uk/services/schools/vincent-house-school
Email address	Vincenthouseschool@theauroragroup.co.uk

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	0	5 to 19	5 to 19
Number of pupils on the school roll	0	72	72

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	65
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	72
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	72
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	72

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	19
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	3

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is located off a main road in Horsham. It has a gated, private entrance. The accommodation consists of a large Victorian building and annex that together form one building. Rooms have been converted to classrooms with some office space, staff spaces and an industrial kitchen so that hot food can be served on site.
- The proprietor body proposes that the school will cater for pupils with autism and associated social and communication needs. Many are likely to have been out of education for more than a year. Some may have a history of eating disorder. It is likely that a high proportion will be girls. The proprietor body intends that all pupils will have an EHC plan, with autism as the main need listed.
- The proprietor body intends to open the school for secondary age pupils initially. If pupils need additional time to be ready for their next stages, they might stay into the sixth form. The proprietor body may expand the age range into primary phase if there is a local need.

Information about this inspection

- The purpose of this inspection was to check whether the school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, if the DfE decides to register it. It was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- Inspectors visited the proposed school site and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, health and safety manager and chair of governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation and records presented as evidence towards the school's likelihood to meet the independent school standards. They also reviewed the proposed school's website and looked at the single central record of recruitment and checks.
- Inspectors held a telephone conversation with the chair of the proprietor body, its director of quality and a quality assurance adviser.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Toby Martlew

His Majesty's Inspector

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