

Inspection of Aurora Severnside School

Unit A21, Berkeley Green Science and Technology Park, Berkeley, Gloucestershire
GL13 9FB

Inspection dates: 8 to 11 July 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

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?

Positive relationships, respect and kindness are at the centre of everything the school does. Pupils develop trusting relationships with staff and benefit from a caring environment. Staff know the pupils well and understand their needs, talents and interests. This builds pupils' self-confidence and the belief they need to thrive. Staff tailor provision for each pupil to effectively meet their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils re-engage with education and succeed.

Many pupils arrive here with a negative experience of education. The school's curriculum prioritises a therapeutic approach so that pupils settle quickly. Over time, pupils' behaviour and attendance improve. The school is aspirational for all pupils. Pupils respond well to this and gain a range of vocational qualifications and GCSEs.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. When pupils struggle with this, staff use a range of personalised strategies to help manage their emotional and behavioural needs. This means that pupils learn in a calm and inclusive environment.

The school provides an extensive selection of additional opportunities based on individual interests. This includes a trip to a local water park and litter picking in the local community. Pupils learn new skills such as 'doggy day care' and coaching in football and boxing.

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

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Many pupils have been out of education for significant periods of time. The school works with external agencies and other professionals to ensure pupils receive a high quality of education.

Many pupils have lost the confidence and resilience to learn. Carefully structured timetables and therapeutic support give pupils the skills they need to learn. Consistent morning routines help pupils to settle and prepare for the day ahead.

The school has designed an ambitious and well-structured curriculum. It has set out the precise knowledge pupils need to learn and remember over time. Pupils arrive with gaps in their knowledge. The school prioritises these to ensure pupils build knowledge sequentially and address the most important gaps. However, at times, the school's high expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently reflected in pupils' work. Teaching does not address accurate use of grammar, sentence construction and transcription, including when pupils write across the curriculum. This limits how highly some pupils achieve.

Staff have secure subject knowledge. They revisit important subject-specific language. For example, pupils use their knowledge of mathematical formulas in order to successfully calculate areas of a range of shapes. Teachers check pupils'

understanding and address misconceptions effectively. This supports pupils to build knowledge sequentially.

Reading is a priority for the school. Staff provide pupils at the earlier stages of reading with effective support to catch up. This helps them to develop confidence and fluency. Pupils read a wide range of ambitious texts, including plays by Shakespeare. The strong focus on deciphering vocabulary and content supports pupils to fully understand the meaning within the texts they read.

Staff have high expectations of how pupils should behave. The school has meticulously planned bespoke behaviour plans that clearly set out how to support pupils with their emotions and behaviour. Staff work tenaciously to support pupils to self-regulate. As a result, pupils make great strides and their behaviour improves.

The school is relentless in its determination to improve attendance for pupils. No stone is left unturned. A holistic approach, including the impressive work by the outreach team, means that pupils make demonstrable improvement in their attendance at school.

The school's personal development offer is exceptional. Each pupil has a bespoke programme that is based on their interests and talents. Leaders are creative in their approach to source future career experience and college placements. The school has built strong relationships with local employers to benefit pupils and the range of work placements available.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is a golden thread that runs throughout the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils learn about the importance of tolerance and respect. They celebrate difference and say that 'it would be boring if we were all the same'. The school does not shy away from tackling sensitive issues to ensure that pupils are fully informed and educated about how to stay safe online and in the world beyond the school gates. Pupils know that they can talk to staff about any worries or concerns they have.

Staff are proud to work at Severnside School. They say they are part of 'one big family'. Staff are enthusiastic about the subjects they lead. They are keen to continue to develop their subjects and widen the current qualifications on offer. Staff appreciate the support they receive to manage their workload and well-being.

The proprietary body and governors ensure that the independent school standards are met and that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school building is well maintained. The local governing board is effective in holding leaders to account. There is a balance of challenge and support. Governors and leaders have a shared vision to continue to drive the school towards excellence.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- On some occasions, teachers do not have high enough expectations of the quality of pupils' written work. At times, pupils' accurate use of grammar, sentence construction and transcription skills are not addressed. This limits how highly some pupils can achieve. The school should ensure that all teachers set high expectations so that pupils take pride in their work and demonstrate their writing skills successfully 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	148662
DfE registration number	916/6027
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10391813
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Number of part-time pupils	9
Proprietor	Beechkeys Limited
Chair	Sharon Pearson
Headteacher	Rachel Lynch
Annual fees (day pupils)	£56,568 to £93,549
Telephone number	01452 671717
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com/severnside
Email address	SevernsideSchool@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 November 2022

Information about this school

- Aurora Severnside is an independent special day school providing education for boys and girls with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is owned by The Aurora Group.
- The school operates from one site: A21, Gloucestershire Science and Technology Park, Berkeley, Gloucestershire GL13 9FB.
- All the pupils have an EHC plan and are placed at the school by their local authorities.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions.

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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the proprietary board and governors.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teaching and non-teaching staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- The lead inspector toured the premises to check for compliance with the independent school standards. A number of key documents were also reviewed,

including policies relating to admissions, behaviour, curriculum, complaints, health and safety and safeguarding.

- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

The school's proposed change to the age range of pupils.

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 provision is implemented.**
- The proprietor body has requested to increase the age range from 11 to 16 to 11 to 19. This is to give pupils additional time in order to complete their key stage 4 qualifications where needed.
- The school has a well-designed and bespoke curriculum for key stage 3 and 4. Its schemes of work incorporate all aspects required by the independent school standards. It takes into consideration the needs of pupils who may join the school. The proprietor body has recruited staff with the experience of teaching secondary-age pupils. The curriculum includes high academic expectations such as functional skills, vocational and GCSE qualifications, with some at a higher level, to ensure that pupils can access learning that is ambitious and matches their academic ability.
- The school has completed the relevant health and safety checks to ensure pupils are safe.
- The school ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Inspection team

Wendy D'Arcy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Leahy

Ofsted Inspector

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