

Aurora Keyes Barn School

Station Road, Salwick, Preston, Lancashire PR4 0YH

Inspection dates

4–6 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school has improved under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and clear direction from the proprietor, the Aurora Group.
- The Governing Panel members provide excellent challenge and support to leaders. They ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Staff are highly skilled and well qualified to support pupils' complex social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- From the time pupils enter school, their behaviour and social skills improve significantly. The school is calm and the atmosphere is one of productive cooperation and teamwork.
- Pupils show pride in their school. They look after their books, the high-quality resources and wonderful displays with care.
- Pupils' needs are assessed thoroughly. The curriculum is planned meticulously to provide each pupil with a programme of work that motivates them and extends their learning.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan work that builds on pupils' prior learning successfully, while minimising behavioural barriers to learning.
- Teaching assistants, key workers and support staff all play an important part in ensuring pupils feel safe and learn successfully.
- Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. Pupils' progress in reading is exceptional. Gaps in pupils' basic skills are successfully resolved so that pupils can use correct grammar and spelling in their writing and are accurate in their mathematical work.
- Pupils do not have frequent opportunities to use and apply their developing skills in writing and mathematics. Leaders are already seeking ways to develop this aspect of the curriculum.
- Pupils' excellent progress is consistent in a range of other subjects, such as art, physical education, geography and history.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. Pupils feel and are safe in school. Staff use positive strategies to prevent or de-escalate serious incidents.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education. They grow in confidence, develop positive attitudes and make significant gains in their learning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to deepen pupils' learning in writing and mathematics, appropriate to their ability, by:
 - enabling them to practise writing for a range of different purposes
 - helping pupils to apply their skills in mathematics in a wider range of contexts.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher's inspirational leadership motivates staff and pupils. Her in-depth knowledge of each pupil, and her high ambition for them, is shared by everyone at the school.
- A key aim of the school is to modify pupils' behaviour and help them to realise their individual potential. Staff achieve this by working together closely to meet each pupil's learning and personal needs. Staff are highly skilled and well qualified to support pupils' complex social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- The headteacher has in-depth knowledge of the school, which is corroborated by thorough quality assurance by the regional education manager. Accurate self-evaluation is based on incisive checks on teaching and careful checks on each pupils' progress. The proprietor and leaders check the independent school standards each month in order to ensure that they are met in full.
- School improvement planning is based on the right priorities to sustain outstanding provision. Leaders are developing the curriculum constantly to meet the changing needs of pupils within the school. They are aware of the need to develop writing and mathematics provision to enable pupils to apply and practise their rapidly developing skills.
- All staff have a leadership role and carry it out successfully. Teachers are skilled leaders in assessment, personal development and teaching and learning. They are excellent leaders in their classrooms, planning interesting activities to engage pupils. Teaching assistants and key workers provide highly effective support to promote pupils' all-round development in the classroom and in individual sessions.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a strength across the school. Staff have access to detailed records on each pupil, appropriate to their role. The SEND leader is knowledgeable and skilled in advising staff on positive strategies to promote learning and good behaviour.
- The office and site managers make important contributions to the smooth running of the school. The school is maintained to a high standard. The office manager skilfully liaises with parents, carers and outside agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are known and supported.
- Staff benefit from a range of opportunities to develop their teaching and leadership skills. For example, the coordinator of the provision for pupils with SEND has completed a Masters level course. Another teacher is attending an external course in senior leadership. Several teaching assistants are being supported to complete level 3 qualifications. In-school training is planned carefully to support school improvement priorities.
- The curriculum is planned meticulously to provide each pupil with a personalised programme of work that motivates them, extends their learning and enables them to experience success. It covers all national curriculum subjects and is underpinned by detailed and accurate assessment of pupils' special educational needs and prior learning.

- Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship are key aspects of the curriculum. Personal and social skills are taught explicitly and developed in all further activities in which pupils participate. Pupils gain a good understanding of British values. There is a strong emphasis on respecting others and showing tolerance of difference in all the school's work. Pupils make excellent gains in their personal development and learn to modify their behaviour successfully. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. For example, pupils take turns to choose a newspaper article each morning and discuss it during the daily assembly. This gives rise to thought-provoking discussion of moral, global and topical issues. Cultural awareness is promoted effectively through religious education and in PSHE. Pupils demonstrated their understanding of different faiths in lessons and an assembly focusing on the meaning of Christmas.
- Pupils' social skills are a key focus in all the school's work. Pupils' growing social awareness and consideration for others was demonstrated when pupils suggested giving up their 'Friday prizes' (rewards for good behaviour) to a local charity collecting for disadvantaged children.
- The school's policy on equality includes the promotion of respect for people with protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act. Staff exemplify tolerance and respect in all their work. Pupils are aware of differences, and show respect, for example for people of different race, disability and sexual orientation. They enjoy playing their 'Equality Street' game in which the differences between everyone at the school are celebrated.
- Leaders work very effectively with a range of external agencies to support pupils' needs and share effective practice. They liaise closely with child and adolescent mental health services, therapists, social care and health professionals to make sure that all of the pupils' needs are met. Local authorities that place pupils at the school are kept well informed about their achievements through annual and interim reports.
- Parents who made their views known are extremely positive about the school. For example, one parent said that: 'The difference Keyes Barn School and its staff have made to my son's life is incredible... he is now a mature, relaxed, comfortable and confident young man who is happy for the first time ever at school.' Several referred to all round development of their child, with one saying that, 'The activities to support his education, health and well-being are amazing.' This inspection supports the views of parents.

Governance

- Governance is provided by a governing panel that is made up of professionals and strategic leaders from within the Aurora group. Panel members have excellent knowledge and skills to challenge and support leaders. Policies and systems, introduced when the Aurora group took over ownership, are of high quality.
- Governors have a thorough understanding of the work of the school, based on quality-assurance visits, checks on the independent school standards and detailed reports from the headteacher.
- Governors invest in high-quality staff training and resources to support teaching and learning. They manage the performance of school leaders and teachers very effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils in school. Records have full details of safeguarding concerns, bullying behaviour, incidents and accidents. The impact of any action taken is closely monitored.
- Staff are well qualified and trained to support pupils with SEND. They are fully trained, for example, in supporting pupils with attachment disorders, autism and attention deficit disorder. All staff are trained in physical intervention techniques to provide positive and safe handling.
- Leaders liaise closely with other agencies to support the safeguarding and welfare needs of pupils. They ensure that pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are met in full.
- The safeguarding and related policies are published on the school's website and take account of government requirements. Staff have completed training relevant to their roles and have a good understanding of their responsibilities. Staff are trained in health and safety, first aid, fire safety, crisis intervention and physical restraint.
- The school premises are safe and secure. Thorough checks on fire safety, water safety, the school site and the premises are carried out and logged by the site manager. Premises are extremely well maintained
- Risk assessments are thorough. Trips out are fully risk assessed. Transport is well organised to ensure that staff and pupils are safe during their journeys to and from school.
- Leaders engage effectively with parents and stakeholders to make sure all pupils are supported and safe. Their attendance is tracked carefully and followed up if necessary. Parents know they can contact the school with any concerns and are confident that they will be dealt with.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Pupils' prior learning and social, emotional and behavioural needs are thoroughly assessed during their first few weeks at school. This in-depth assessment ensures that teaching is finely tuned to the social, emotional and academic needs of each pupil. Each pupil has a detailed individual education plan with clear targets for learning and behaviour.
- Teachers meticulously plan individual programmes of work that build on each pupil's prior learning successfully, while minimising behavioural barriers to learning. Teachers and support workers are skilled at questioning and adapting teaching to the needs of pupils. Pupils make excellent progress from their different starting points as a result.
- Pupils' language and reading skills are developed exceptionally well. Teachers and support staff are skilled at prompting pupils to apply their knowledge and skills to work out the meaning of a text. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developed expertly

across the curriculum and in shared time. Pupils talk with growing confidence about their achievements in whole-school sessions.

- The focus on spelling, grammar and punctuation helps pupils to develop technical accuracy in their writing. Pupils enjoy writing and some said they would like more opportunities to write independently. Currently, some pupils have limited experience of different types of writing, such as poetry, factual and persuasive writing.
- Pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills are built up skilfully and sequentially following a detailed analysis of pupils' prior learning and identification of any gaps. Teachers cover a broad range of content in order to help pupils catch up with the standards expected for their age. The work is challenging for most pupils. However, pupils have few opportunities to apply their knowledge to activities requiring reasoning and problem-solving.
- Teachers are skilled in devising activities that interest pupils and promote learning across the curriculum. When learning about area in mathematics, for example, pupils were motivated by designing animal enclosures for their imaginary zoo.
- Teachers make links between subjects where possible. While learning about the properties of different materials in science, for example, pupils experimented with different materials in design and technology and art. Teaching makes the most of pupils' talents and skills and supports them to shine in the subjects that they enjoy.
- Teaching assistants and key workers support pupils' learning very effectively. They are well qualified and skilled. Their work with individual pupils has a highly successful impact on pupils' progress and personal development.
- Parents are extremely pleased with teaching and learning, with one stating, 'My son has started to catch up with his learning. He enjoys this school and is really happy with the progress he has made.'

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils often have had several years of disengagement with education prior to joining the school. The longer pupils are in this school, the more they develop a love of learning, become motivated and take pride in their achievements. They develop social skills that support positive interactions and build lasting friendships.
- Pupils' mental and physical health is a prime consideration in the work of the school. Staff know each pupil extremely well and are tolerant and caring in their interactions. They use their high level of expertise to develop pupils' self-esteem and emotional resilience. Additional individualised support, from key workers, therapists and educational psychologists, enhances pupils' personal development.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Pupils realise that each of them can be unpredictable at times due to their particular needs, but that they have absolute confidence in staff to deal effectively with any incidents.

- Pupils feel free from bullying and records show that incidents are rare. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including bullying associated with prejudice.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep safe in the world outside school. The school places a strong emphasis on helping pupils understand the risks associated with online activity and extremism.
- Parents are extremely positive about the care provided by staff. For example, one said that: 'Since our son has been attending this school he has progressed really well, and I put that down to the patience, support, care and tolerance of staff.' Parents are well informed and feel that: 'Regular reviews ensure we are always kept up to date with our son's progress.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- From the time they enter school, pupils' behaviour improves rapidly. New pupils quickly adapt to the culture of the school and realise that positive behaviour brings its rewards. The school is calm and the atmosphere is one of productive cooperation and teamwork.
- Behaviour is closely monitored and recorded by all staff on a daily basis. Pupils also carry out a self-review of their behaviour daily. Staff are aware of triggers for anxiety and use positive strategies to de-escalate and prevent serious issues arising.
- Pupils are motivated by the positive rewards and encouragement that they receive, such as the 'Friday Prize'. Teachers manage behaviour through interesting activities and by adapting activities to sustain motivation.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility within the school, as monitors and school councillors, for example. They keep the school clean and tidy. They carefully look after the wonderful displays and high-quality resources. Their books are beautifully kept and they try extremely hard with their written work.
- Pupils are extremely well behaved in assemblies and shared times. They listen attentively and applaud each other's achievements with enthusiasm. Pupils learn to take turns in speaking and show respect for other pupils' views.
- At social times, pupils work and play cooperatively. They enter school calmly, having been brought into school safely on the school's transport. Teachers welcome them and help them settle to constructive activity.
- There are occasions when a pupil struggles to manage their own behaviour. In these instances, staff are skilled in supporting them to become calm while ensuring the safety of other pupils.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards the school are reflected in their high levels of attendance. At 97% last year, attendance was above the national average. Any absences are followed up immediately.
- No pupils have been permanently excluded and fixed-term exclusions are rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils join the school at any stage between Year 1 and Year 6. They have varied experiences, wide-ranging special needs and different academic capabilities. All pupils make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Pupils typically enter the school working well below the national curriculum objectives for their age and have a reading age well below their chronological age. Pupils learn essential basic skills to enable them to access the curriculum. As the barriers to learning are reduced and gaps in learning are addressed, pupils make excellent progress in literacy, mathematics and computing. Some pupils make enough progress to enable them to enter for and do well in national standardised assessments in reading, writing or mathematics.
- Pupils systematically learn to use correct grammar and spelling in their writing. Their handwriting also improves, so they are able to produce technically accurate and well-presented pieces of written work. However, they currently do not often write for different purposes, so their understanding of key features of some types of writing is limited.
- The gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge are addressed systematically and effectively. Pupils' mathematical knowledge increases significantly and pupils grow to enjoy mathematics immensely. Currently, pupils' ability to use and apply their knowledge to reasoning or problem-solving is limited. Leaders are already reviewing the curriculum to consider how such activities can be introduced.
- Pupils' progress in reading is exceptional. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6, they read fluently, enjoying a range of exciting books suited to their ability. They infer meaning from what they read and analyse characters' motivation effectively. Pupils across the school develop a love of reading and talk enthusiastically about the books they are reading.
- Pupils make excellent progress in other subjects. They enjoy design and technology, for example, where they were making model playground equipment. Their art work is excellent, showing clear progression in skills and techniques. They enjoy experimenting and investigating in science, and develop their physical skills in a wide range of physical activity. Swimming is particularly popular. Pupils develop their skills sequentially in history and geography and gain a good understanding of the world through religious education and citizenship.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education. They grow in confidence, develop positive attitudes and make significant gains in their learning. Most pupils continue in special education on leaving the school, mostly staying within the Aurora group independent schools, supported through local authority funding. A minority of pupils go into mainstream schools.

School details

Unique reference number	135543
DfE registration number	888/6041
Inspection number	10067899

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 12
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kathryn Rudd
Chair	Kathryn Rudd
Headteacher	Diana de Nooijer-Turnbull
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,037
Telephone number	01772 673 672
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com/keyes-barn-school
Email address	Kbs-reception@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous inspection	9–11 February 2016

Information about this school

- Keyes Barn School opened in 2008, under the ownership of Beechkeys Limited. The Aurora group became the owner in April 2016.
- It is a small independent special school which caters for day pupils. It is registered for up to 24 boys aged from five to 12 years old who have significant social, emotional, behavioural and mental health needs.
- Currently there are 21 pupils on roll aged seven to 11. The vast majority are of White British heritage.

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. They are taught in three classes with a qualified teacher and two or three teaching assistants in each class.
- The pupils are placed in the school by four local authorities.
- The school was last inspected in February 2016, when it was judged to be good.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2016. She has worked in the school since it opened and was previously the coordinator of the provision for pupils with SEND.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- She spoke with pupils about their work, personal development and their views of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the Aurora company regional education manager and staff. She spoke by telephone with the proprietor and representatives of local authorities who place children in the school.
- The inspector took account of five responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire and 11 responses to the confidential staff questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning, checks on teaching and learning and pupils' progress.
- She checked the school's compliance with the Independent School Standards.
- The DfE commissioned Ofsted to carry out the standard inspection earlier in the cycle than previously planned.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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