



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

## **Report for a Progress Monitoring Visit**

**Aurora Eccles School**

**February 2020**



## School's details

<b>School</b>	Aurora Eccles School			
<b>DfE number</b>	926/6041			
<b>Address</b>	Aurora Eccles School Quidenham Norwich Norfolk NR16 2NZ			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01953 887217			
<b>Email address</b>	eccleschool@the-aurora-group.com			
<b>Interim principal</b>	Mrs Arabella Hardy			
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Aurora Group			
<b>Age range</b>	6 to 16			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	155			
	<b>Juniors</b>	37	<b>Seniors</b>	118
<b>Date of visit</b>	24 February 2020			

## 1. Introduction

### Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Aurora Eccles School is an independent co-educational day school which provides specialist education for pupils from the ages of six to sixteen years. It has been owned by the Aurora Group Ltd since March 2017, and the executive team of the group provide the governance for the school. The school no longer accommodates boarders. The school has 155 pupils, all of whom require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities, and 150 pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Two pupils speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was an additional inspection in June 2019, and its former residential provision was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2019.

### Purpose of the visit

- 1.2 This was an unannounced progress monitoring visit at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the additional inspection on 28 June 2019.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2(1)(a) (curriculum)	Met
Part 1, paragraph 3 (teaching)	Met
Part 1, paragraph 4 (framework for pupil performance)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Not met
Part 5, paragraph 25 (maintenance)	Not met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of safeguarding policy)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (quality of leadership and management)	Not met

## 2. Inspection findings

### Quality of education provided – curriculum [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2(1)(a)]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 The school has strengthened its curriculum arrangements since the previous inspection. Senior leaders have carried out a review of the school's educational provision to determine future learning pathways to meet the individual needs of all pupils. Suitable half-termly unit plans are devised from the long-term planning by subject teachers in the senior school and class teachers in the primary department. In the senior school the curriculum is divided into three pathways; emotional, social and/or moderate learning disabilities associated with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Pupils can follow parts of more than one pathway. Within the vocational pathway the pupils are appropriately channelled towards college transitions. They carry out activities such as working in the school's walled garden, learning bicycle safety, and extending their experiences through hands-on project-based learning. Pupils can move between pathways so that a pupil on an academic pathway can also access some vocational studies. Further new initiatives that have strengthened the school's curriculum provision include the accelerated reader scheme and the individual case-studies to record attainment and mark achievement.
- 2.3 There are suitable individualised programmes for all the pupils and their needs are reviewed regularly including at the annual review of their EHC plans. The school's register of special education needs contains detailed information about each pupil's needs, the interventions in place and the progress being made towards the EHC plan targets. This document is kept up to date through regular review and meetings including key leadership, teaching and support staff.
- 2.4 The school's new management has identified staff training as a priority to further strengthen the school's curriculum and teaching arrangements and to support the retention of staff and reduce the current level of turnover.

### Quality of education provided – teaching [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3]

- 2.5 The school meets the standard.
- 2.6 Teaching throughout the school is generally well matched to pupils' abilities. Teaching shows a suitable awareness of the diverse range of pupils' needs as was reflected in the targeted questioning directed at the individual pupils. School leaders and managers have a suitable programme in place to check whether the teaching has addressed certain key areas such as meeting the targets set in EHC plans, providing suitable challenge for the more able and promoting higher order thinking skills. Teaching shows a good knowledge of each pupil so that approaches and styles can be tailored to individuals. This enables all pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability. Reviews of EHC plans show an increasing level of objectives being either fully or partially met.
- 2.7 Teaching uses resources effectively. Provision for information and communication technology has been strengthened. Teaching uses specific subject resources effectively, for example in art or science. For the most part, teaching uses effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly, although this has been identified by school leaders as a continued focus for further professional development.

**Quality of education provided – framework for pupil performance [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 4]**

- 2.8 The school meets the standard.
- 2.9 Progress in English and mathematics, and in science for senior pupils, is recorded for all pupils in the school. A suitable colour coding system shows whether a certain target and/or aspect has been mastered, or whether there is still work to be undertaken. For the three learning pathways the teaching uses appropriate course progress trackers which combine teacher assessment alongside external assessments such as GCSE and specific external assessed awards. Such tracking enables clear next steps to be identified.
- 2.10 The effectiveness of the tracking system is reviewed periodically. Reviews of EHC plans are led effectively by specialist staff from the school. The data gathered by the school through the progress trackers and the core subject data are used effectively in conjunction with teacher assessment to regularly review the EHC plans leading up to the formal annual review.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]****Safeguarding policy**

- 2.11 The school meets the requirement.
- 2.12 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

**Safeguarding implementation**

- 2.13 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.14 The school's safeguarding team liaises effectively with local safeguarding partners. All members of staff and governors, including those with designated responsibility for safeguarding have appropriate levels of safeguarding training, attend regular update training and have a clear understanding of safeguarding and their responsibilities. Suitable arrangements are implemented for the induction of new staff, which includes training in safeguarding, including on peer-on-peer abuse. A suitable code of conduct is implemented effectively and understood by all staff and includes advice on e-safety and the appropriate use of social media. During interviews, staff reported that they feel confident with the school's whistleblowing procedures and that they would feel happy to make any referral directly to children's social services should the need arise. They understand when peer-on-peer abuse may be a safeguarding concern. However, current arrangements for recording incidents of peer-on-peer abuse are ineffective and do not allow school leaders and managers to be able to readily identify patterns and trends.
- 2.15 During interview, pupils reported that they could always speak to members of staff if they have any concerns or worries. However, although pupils stated that, whilst much of the time they felt secure at school, they felt concerned about their safety because of the deficiencies in the maintenance of the school site. The inadequate maintenance of the school site presents a significant safeguarding risk to pupils.
- 2.16 Following the previous inspection, the school carried out an audit of its safeguarding arrangements with the local authority. The associated report formed part of the annual review of the school's safeguarding arrangements by the proprietors.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9]**

2.17 The school does not meet all of the standard.

2.18 The school has a suitable behaviour policy in place. However, the school's processes and procedures to promote positive behaviour are not effective. The school has identified the need to strengthen the professional development of all staff to bring about consistency in the approach to negative behaviour and to de-escalate situations when poor behaviour occurs. The current system for recording incidents of poor behaviour is not suitable because it does not allow school leaders to easily identify particular types of behaviour, so as to determine patterns and trends. A new framework for recording has recently been introduced but it is too early to determine whether this has had any positive impact on the school's behavioural strategy. Behaviour observed around the school was occasionally poor and not consistently and appropriately challenged by all staff. The school has a suitable system of rewards and sanctions which is generally understood by the pupils. The rewards and sanctions arrangements appropriately reflect the specific needs of individual pupils.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]**

2.19 The school does not meet the standard.

2.20 The school's arrangements to prevent bullying in so far as is reasonably practicable have strengthened since the previous inspection but still do not meet the standard required. The school has introduced a new scheme of work for personal, social and health education which contains suitable units on bullying. The school feels that the scheme has had a positive impact on the school's anti-bullying strategy, not least in ensuring that pupils know the definition of bullying and its impact on others. However, the current system for recording incidents of bullying does not readily enable patterns or trends to be identified. The school is aware of this and has put in place new systems to separate one-off incidents of unkind behaviour from bullying. It is too early to judge the impact of these new arrangements.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11]**

2.21 The school does not meet the standard.

2.22 The school does not ensure the health and safety of pupils whilst on the school site. Insufficient attention is given to a range of health and safety matters that include appropriate site risk assessments, training for staff to deal with health and safety matters and a strategic approach to factors such as slips and trip hazards. Health and safety arrangements are not supported by a regular review process by school leaders.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14]**

2.23 The school does not meet the standard.

2.24 The school has reviewed and strengthened the supervision of pupils since the previous inspection. Newly appointed school leaders and managers have identified that this is still an area for further improvement. There are certain times of the school day when the school's supervision arrangements are not effective. These include when some pupils move between lessons. Current arrangements mean staff are not always certain of the whereabouts of all pupils. This is particularly important given the nature of the specific needs of some pupils.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16]**

2.25 The school does not meet the standard.

2.26 The school has a suitable risk assessment policy in place that enables risks to be identified and measures to be put in place to mitigate such risks. However, there are not suitable risk assessments in place for individual aspects of the school site. Scrutiny of risk assessments does not show a comprehensive approach to all site risks and associated activities. Site risk assessments are not reviewed effectively by school leaders and managers to determine the success of any measures instigated to reduce risk.

**Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25]**

2.27 The school does not meet the standard.

2.28 The school does not ensure that the school premises and accommodation are maintained to a sufficient level to ensure the health and safety and well-being of pupils. There is not an effective strategic approach to deal with the maintenance of certain aspects of site maintenance, such as gutter clearance and keeping pathways clear of rotting leaf matter.

**Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]**

2.29 The school meets the requirement for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

**Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]**

2.30 The school does not meet the standard.

2.31 The proprietor does not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Insufficient attention is given to the oversight of safeguarding, behaviour, bullying, supervision, risk assessments and the maintenance of the school premises and accommodation.

### 3. Regulatory action points

3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

#### **ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7**

- Strengthen arrangements for dealing with, and the recording of, peer-on-peer abuse as part of the school's wider safeguarding responsibilities [paragraph 7(a) and (b)]

#### **ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 9**

- Strengthen arrangements for dealing with, and the recording of, incidents of inappropriate behaviour and ensure all staff are sufficiently trained in this area [paragraph 9(b) and (c)]

#### **ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 10**

- Strengthen arrangements for dealing with, and the recording of, any bullying incidents as part of an effective anti-bullying strategy [paragraph 10]

#### **ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 11**

- Ensure that health and safety arrangements are regularly reviewed to reduce the risks of potential incidents and that staff are suitably trained to deal with any health and safety matter [paragraph 11]

#### **ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 14**

- Ensure that pupils are always appropriately supervised, and that staff know the whereabouts of all pupils during the school day, before school and at the end of the day [paragraph 14]

#### **ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 16**

- Ensure that school leaders and managers review risk assessments regularly to be able to determine their impact on the safety of pupils [paragraph 16 (a) and (b)]

#### **ISSR Part 5, Premises and accommodation, paragraph 25**

- Ensure that school premises are maintained to a suitable standard to ensure the safety of pupils at all times [paragraph 25]

#### **ISSR Part 8, Leadership and management, paragraph 34**

- Ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)]

## **4. Summary of evidence**

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and talked with the executive principal on behalf of the proprietors. They visited different areas of the school, observed lessons and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.