

Aurora Keyes Barn School

Address: Station Rd, Salwick, Preston, PR4 0YH

Unique reference number (URN): 135543

Inspection report: 7 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.
- **Insufficient evidence:** Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Exceptional

Inclusion

Exceptional 

Inclusion proudly underpins the school's transformational impact on pupils' learning and development. Every decision, intervention and interaction is centred on each pupil's individual needs. From the moment that pupils transition to the school, they are welcomed unreservedly and feel instantly valued. Seamless work with professional colleagues, for example, from the virtual school and occupational health, makes sure that pupils get the right support so they can thrive.

Staff training is of a high quality and relevant. Pupils often lack the motivation to engage with learning when they join the school. Staff are experienced, patient and skilled. They get to work immediately identifying and understanding each pupil's needs. Staff build remarkable bonds with pupils, breaking down any barriers to learning and engagement quickly.

Each pupil has an individualised, tailored plan in place that is aligned closely to their education, health and care plan. Leaders monitor pupils' social and emotional growth meticulously, alongside their academic development. Any gaps in pupils' learning are identified and resolved swiftly. The school provides excellent support for pupils known, or previously known, to children's social care. This is helped by close joint working between staff and parents and carers. Staff listen carefully to families to ensure that their voice is central to each pupil's provision. The exceptional impact of the school's inclusive practices sets pupils up remarkably well for their next steps.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard 

Pupils achieve extremely well from their starting points. Many pupils attain in line with, or above, age-related expectations. The tailored curriculum, alongside clear systems to monitor their progress, ensure that pupils are successful across the full range of subjects. They are extremely well prepared for their next steps in education.

The school places significant emphasis on pupils' non-academic achievements. For example, pupils' milestones in being brave enough to try a new activity or to collaborate successfully, are equally celebrated. Staff are highly skilled at understanding pupils' needs and help them to access the full breadth of the curriculum successfully.

Pupils' work reflects the intended curriculum and shows their progress over time. This includes developing their key skills with accuracy. Pupils talk confidently about their learning. For example, in physical education, they could talk in detail about throwing and jumping, using subject-specific vocabulary. In science, they could link their learning about reproduction to topics they had learned previously.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

The school sets high expectations for pupils' attendance and behaviour. Pupils often join the school having struggled to access education previously. Typically, pupils hold negative views about education when they start. Staff prioritise building positive relationships with pupils and their families. This helps to gain a detailed understanding of the barriers that pupils face. Every pupil has a personalised attendance plan, with tailored support in place when needed. As a result, pupils' rates of attendance increase very significantly over time. Pupils say they want to come to school because they don't want to miss anything.

The school's behaviour systems are rooted firmly in positive relationships. Staff work tirelessly to teach pupils strategies to self-regulate and focus fully on learning. Disruption to lessons is rare. Taking their lead from staff, pupils learn the importance of being respectful towards others. They look after their environment. The school's atmosphere is peaceful and purposeful, yet filled with praise, laughter and a sense of accomplishment. Pupils are friendly, polite and behave considerately towards adults and each other. Pupils do not worry about bullying or discrimination because they trust that staff will swiftly resolve any issues.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard 

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. It takes into account the school's mixed-age classes and pupils' varied starting points. Staff know precisely what knowledge and skills pupils should learn at each stage and in each subject. Subject leaders are experienced and passionate about their areas. High-quality training allows expert staff to design activities that are bespoke to each pupil. For example, in a physical education lesson, staff use whistling balls to encourage reluctant pupils to learn how to throw a javelin. Staff check learning closely at the start and end of each lesson to make sure that pupils are on track.

Staff use clear modelling and high-quality questioning to encourage pupils to think deeply. Throughout lessons, staff are adept at supporting each pupil to manage their emotional needs and focus on their learning. This is crucial to pupils' success. The development of pupils' oracy and vocabulary is a priority across all classes. Many pupils arrive with significant gaps in their basic knowledge. Staff deliver rapid catch-up sessions to resolve this. The school has recently refined its approach to support with pupils' spelling and handwriting to ensure that this is as effective as it is for reading and mathematics.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

The proprietor and school provide a lifeline to pupils who have struggled to access education elsewhere. As such, pupils' best interests are at the forefront of everything that the school does and its ongoing commitment to improvement. The proprietor and governors have a deep understanding of the school's context. They recognise leaders' strengths in establishing nurture and relationships as the bedrock of the school's ethos. Parents and carers share their appreciation of this school eagerly and the positive changes and transformations they have seen in their children since they started to attend.

There are clear structures in place to oversee the school's performance, as well as offering continuous channels of two-way communication. Staff have an up-to-date understanding of

any decisions and changes and are able to feedback their views. The proprietor has established suitable processes for ensuring that all its statutory duties, including in relation to the independent school standards, are met consistently over time. Additional scrutiny, challenge and assurance are provided through the school's governing body.

Staff development is a priority. The proprietor provides a comprehensive programme of professional learning. Consequently, staff are knowledgeable about the curriculum and are well equipped to support and teach pupils who face complex barriers to learning. Staff enjoy their roles and are particularly proud to work in such a supportive team. They appreciate the measures that leaders take to listen, reduce their workload and look after their wellbeing.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The school places great emphasis on pupils developing the character, knowledge and skills that they need to navigate life successfully. A coherent and very-well-thought-out programme of personal development is in place. The school considers the different experiences and challenges that pupils may face carefully when they join arrive. The school's pastoral offer is thorough. Highly trained staff are matched carefully with pupils as keyworkers, ensuring that each pupil has access to the expertise they need most and their wellbeing is nurtured.

Pupils relish the vast range of enrichment opportunities that broaden their experiences and bring the curriculum to life. They talk excitedly about their nature walks, and visits to an aquarium and a Roman town. Relationships are a fundamental part of pupils' learning here. Staff lead by example, helping to shape pupils' social skills.

Pupils are taught how to minimise risks to their wellbeing when online. They understand how to look after their own physical and mental health. They take part in regular sports competitions, including the annual 'Aurora Olympics'. Activities such as cooking, coding, music and fencing help to nurture pupils' talents and interests. These are planned so that all pupils can access them. As a result of their experiences in school, some pupils have successfully joined clubs outside school such as cub scouts and football teams. Careful staff guidance helps to turn pupils' previously negative social experiences into positive new beginnings.

A range of visitors and experiences, along with encouragement from staff, help pupils to develop self-belief and build ambitions for their futures. Pupils are very knowledgeable about the important British values. Through their religious education lessons, they learn about faiths and cultures different to their own. They develop a secure understanding of important concepts like equality and discrimination, in readiness for life in modern Britain.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Aurora Keyes Barn School provides a homely, rural setting where pupils thrive and flourish. Pupils are welcomed warmly each morning by staff who know them remarkably well. Pupils benefit from highly individualised packages of support that meet their educational, health and care needs. From their varied starting points, pupils are nurtured patiently so that they

can access learning. They progress well through the curriculum. This is because staff take time to understand each pupil's needs and backgrounds comprehensively. Pupils feel secure and well cared for because staff build positive relationships with them and their families and respond effectively to their needs. If pupils have a concern that they cannot resolve by themselves, they know that staff will act immediately to help. As a result, any incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are extremely rare and dealt with quickly.

Pupils rise to the school's high expectations of what they can achieve. They demonstrate the school's values through increased participation, responsibility and respect. Many pupils have experienced a fragmented start to their education previously. They frequently arrive with attainment below age-related expectations. High-quality teaching ensures that pupils become absorbed in learning and start to take pride in their accomplishments. In time, pupils achieve extremely well from their starting points.

Pupils are at the heart of the school's passionate vision to develop their character, alongside their academic successes. Pupils attend school well because they want to be here. They embrace learning and love being with their friends. Pupils value the wealth of enrichment opportunities on offer. They enjoy their outdoor learning sessions in particular, as well as physical education lessons at the local sports centre and swimming pool. Pupils are proud to hold positions of responsibility, such as being members of the school and eco councils. They gain increasing independence and confidence. This prepares pupils successfully for life beyond school.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to support teachers to further embed the teaching of the spelling and handwriting so that pupils can apply their skills consistently and achieve high standards.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this standard inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders including the headteacher, the chair of governors and the proprietor, during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs including autistic spectrum condition and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder. All pupils have an

education, health and care plan.

The school does not use alternative provision.

A new chair of the proprietor board, Sharon Pearson, was appointed in July 2025.

The fees currently charged are £64,038.

The school’s email address is kbs-reception@the-aurora-group.com

Headteacher: Dalziel McAlister

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

1. Quality of education provided	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
5. Premises of and accommodation at schools	Standards met
All standards have been met.	

All standards have been met.

All standards have been met.

All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:
Ruth Moran, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Maria McGarry, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 7 July 2026

Total pupils

24

School capacity

24

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

Insufficient evidence

Inspectors were unable to gather reliable enough evidence to grade an evaluation area. This is rare and normally only happens if there are no pupils on roll at the school.

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