

Aurora Chaldon School

Address: Chaldon Rise, Rockshaw Road, Merstham, Redhill, RH1 3DB

Unique reference number (URN): 151775

Inspection report: 2 June 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Many pupils join the school after significant periods of absence and are not used to coming to school regularly. Pupils' attendance is improving as a result of leaders' targeted work. From the moment pupils join, the school helps them to feel included and gain a strong sense of belonging. The school works closely with parents and carers and pupils to promote the importance of high attendance at school. The school's policies and procedures reflect national guidance. Any emerging attendance concerns are identified and addressed swiftly. For those who still find attending school tricky, staff provide further in-school and external support to bring about the required improvements.

Leaders have an effective and now embedded behaviour policy that threads through the life of the school. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Days lost to suspension are dropping, demonstrating the increasing effectiveness of the school's approach to behaviour. As a result, pupils typically behave well and learn in a calm, orderly and supportive environment. Leaders deal with the rare incidents of bullying, discrimination or harassment effectively. Pupils are supported well to develop positive behaviour habits. For example, they are supported to recognise their own emotions and to empathise with others.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school has a clear commitment to supporting pupils' personal development and preparing pupils for adulthood. Pupils learn about themselves and life outside school in a variety of ways, including through formal lessons, discussions and project work. The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is coherent and logically sequenced. Leaders take pupils' starting points into consideration when selecting the content for each unit. Pupils gain an age-appropriate understanding of a range of themes. These include developing their sense of self, the features of healthy relationships and how to stay safe, including online. This PSHE curriculum is carefully matched to the individual needs of pupils, including any social and emotional needs.

Pastoral support is a real strength of the school. Pupils know exactly who they can talk to if they are worried. Staff take time to listen carefully when pupils feel anxious and help pupils to work through their concerns. This is supplemented by highly purposeful therapeutic support for the pupils when they need it.

The school's programme for personal development prepares pupils more widely for their next steps post-16. This includes activities such as food preparation, financial management and computing. To further pupils' interests, the school provides opportunities for pupils to play sports and music, as well as develop their art and cultural skills. This brings pupils together, creating a sense of unity and belonging. They visit many places of interest to develop their cultural awareness. Pupils typically have a secure understanding of the importance of the fundamental British values. This helps them to gain the skills they need to live confidently and positively in modern Britain. Careers education is well established. For example, pupils write CVs, explore colleges and meet with independent careers advisers. All

pupils in Year 11 are hoping to move on successfully to college, training or employment when they leave the school.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' academic learning across the curriculum is variable. In some subjects, pupils make steady progress and many achieve appropriate qualifications. However, not all pupils make the progress they could, particularly those who remain at the earliest stages of reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, some of the independent school standards for achievement are not met.

Importantly, leaders have paid particular attention to ensuring that pupils are well prepared for adulthood. Pupils' achievements can be seen in their growing independence and as they employ the strategies they have been taught to manage their emotions. All pupils, by the time they finish Year 11, learn some key life skills, such as learning to cook and learning how to stay safe online. Pupils also learn from a well-balanced personal, social and health curriculum. Leaders prioritise helping pupils to secure a place in further education, employment or training, when they leave school. Pupils are supported well to understand the available options and the actions that they should take to achieve their aims.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is suitably broad, ambitious and logically ordered. In some subjects, however, the curriculum is not taught as intended. This is because leaders have not ensured that all staff have a clear understanding of the pupils' next academic steps. This means that learning activities are not always well matched to what pupils already know and can do. As a result, in some subjects, some pupils do not make the progress through the curriculum that they could. Consequently, some of the independent school standards relating to the curriculum and teaching are not met. However, in other subjects, teachers deliver their area of expertise with precision and excellent knowledge of individual pupils. In these subjects, teachers check carefully what pupils know and build their knowledge and skills in these areas effectively.

Pupils who are at the earliest stages of reading, writing and mathematics are not routinely given the precise help that they need. This impacts how well these pupils can access the full curriculum because learning activities are not routinely adjusted to enable them to access the intended learning. As a result, pupils do not catch up as quickly as they should in these key areas.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Until recently, leaders had not established a clear or consistent process to meet pupils' academic needs. New systems are in the early stages of making a positive difference. Over time, leaders have not ensured that teachers plan carefully enough for pupils' small, next

steps in learning. As a result, the academic progress for pupils is hampered and gaps in pupils' knowledge have not closed quickly enough. This is particularly relevant to pupils who are still at the earlier stages of learning in reading, writing or mathematics. As a result of this, some elements in part 1 of the independent school standards are not met. Leaders understand that their focus on academic improvement has not been rapid enough.

Systems for identifying and addressing pupils' pastoral needs are, however, considerably well organised. Pupils' pastoral needs are well identified and addressed. Plans show considerable understanding of the individual needs of pupils. This means that pupils are settling back into school life effectively after many have had considerable periods out of education.

Leaders take care to ensure that effective support is put into place for pupils who attend alternative provision or are known to social care. This support typically matches both pupils' academic and pastoral needs, as well as helping them to prepare for their next steps in life.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Despite the unwavering ambition of the proprietor body to provide high-quality pastoral care and academic education for vulnerable pupils at the school, at present this is only partially achieved. While leaders have made sure that staff are well trained to support pupils' pastoral needs, there has not been enough focus on effective teaching and learning. As a result, the proprietor has not ensured that there is consistent, high-quality teaching across the school, and some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. This means that the proprietor has not ensured that the independent school standards linked to the quality of education and achievement are all met. The proprietor has ensured that all of the other standards related to, for example, pupil welfare, safeguarding and the premises are met.

The proprietary boards' own evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's current work is accurate. They receive comprehensive information from leaders and validate this effectively through visits, discussions and scrutiny of evidence. They evaluate the school's strengths with clarity and identify appropriate priorities for improvement. Governors monitor the progress of these improvements, but additional rigor to accelerate improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive is necessary.

The school has seen a high turnover of staff in its first year of opening. Many current staff are positive about working at the school, and the support and training they are routinely given to support pupils' pastoral needs. However, the training which leaders have provided to develop teaching and learning is more recent, and has not yet had the full impact leaders intend.

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

Pupils at Aurora Chaldon School are part of a warm, welcoming community. They settle quickly each day because staff know them well and value each pupil as an individual. All pupils have a diagnosis of autism, and many have additional vulnerabilities. When pupils join this school, most have had negative or disrupted experiences of school previously. This

school helps pupils to get back on track. Pupils who previously struggled with attendance re-engage through well-considered personalised timetables.

Staff make sure that pupils' well-being is a high priority. Pupils' pastoral needs are carefully checked so that they are well understood. Pupils who need it get regular, purposeful therapeutic support. However, pupils' academic progress is hampered by variability in how well teachers deliver different subjects and understand the needs of individual pupils. This is especially the case for pupils who remain at the early stages of learning reading, writing and mathematics.

Behaviour across the school is generally positive, and learning in classrooms is normally purposeful. However, there are times when some pupils need help to behave well, due to their complex needs. Staff are adept at helping pupils to refocus should they become distressed. As a result, the school is typically calm.

The school's positive ethos is reflected in the respect that pupils typically have for each other and for staff. Pupils say that any friendship issues or bullying are addressed effectively by staff. Pupils enjoy school, especially participating in the wide range of activities on offer. The trips that school leaders organise, for example the upcoming 'Harry Potter Studios' trip, enthuse and excite pupils. They take pride in their responsibilities, such as those of the school council or environmental work.

Staff help pupils to grow their independence and interdependence. Pupils experience a caring, stable and aspirational environment that helps them feel increasingly successful. They develop important life skills, such as cooking and budgeting. This all builds together as leaders actively encourage pupils to look ahead to positive future pathways and career opportunities.

Next steps

- Leaders, including governors, must ensure that pupils who remain at the earliest stages of reading, writing and mathematics have every opportunity to learn these fundamental skills and knowledge as quickly as possible.
- Leaders must ensure that teachers' assessment of pupils' academic achievement clearly identifies pupils' next steps in learning. Leaders should ensure there is a clear strategy of how these targets will be achieved.
- Leaders, including governors, must ensure that the full curriculum is taught well, including ensuring that adaptations to activities are well considered and based on pupils' individual needs.

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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with the principal and other school leaders, the chair of the proprietary board, governors, including the acting chair, and representatives of local authorities who place pupils at the school.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan and a diagnosis of autism.

The school currently uses 3 alternative providers, 2 of which are unregistered.

The school operates from 2 sites. The main school site is at Chaldon Rise, Rockshaw Road, Merstham, Redhill, RH1 3DB. The second site is at the Aurora Caterham Education Centre, Francis Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 5NR.

The school currently has 53 pupils on roll, with a capacity of 100 pupils. The school's registration allows the school to admit pupils between the ages of 5 and 19, but presently only pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 attend the school.

This is the first standard inspection of the school since it was registered by the Department for Education in August 2025.

The school admitted its first pupils in September 2025.

The name of the proprietor is Beechkeys Limited. The chair of the proprietor body is Sharon Pearson.

The fees currently charged are from £62,584 to £72,806.

The email address of the school is chaldonschool@theauroragroup.co.uk.

Principal: David Thomas

Independent school standards

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

1. Quality of education provided	Standards not met
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The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 2(1)

The standard in this paragraph is met if–

- (a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and

Paragraph 2(2)

For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–

- (b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;

Paragraph 3

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–

- (a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
- (c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
- (d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
- (g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

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.

6. Provision of information

Standards met

All standards have been met.

7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Standards met

All standards have been met.

8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 34(1)

The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—

- (a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
- (b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

Lead inspector:

Chris Parker, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Alice Roberts, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

Total pupils

53

School capacity

100

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

53

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

N/A

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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