

Inspection of Aurora Brambles School

159 Longmeanygate, Midge Hall, Leyland, Lancashire PR26 7TB

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy attending this school. They trust the adults in school to look after them and to keep them safe. Pupils said that they particularly enjoy spending time with the school's therapy dog, especially at the start of the school day.

The new leadership team are ambitious for all pupils to succeed. Staff and governors share leaders' high expectations. However, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects.

Pupils told inspectors that behaviour in school has improved. Pupils are confident that when bullying occurs, it is sorted out by leaders. However, some pupils' behaviour can often be boisterous, particularly when pupils are moving around the school site. This causes other pupils to feel anxious. Some staff do not manage pupils' behaviour effectively outside of the classroom.

Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy taking part in sporting events and developing their skills in art and design. Pupils are proud of the work that they do to support local charities through fund raising events. The new outdoor curriculum is beginning to help pupils to build their confidence and teamwork during the increasing range of opportunities now provided. However, some pupils struggle to use their new skills in different situations.

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

All pupils who attend the school have an education, care and health plan. Most pupils join the school at different times during the academic year. Many have not had any formal education for a period of time. They have gaps in their knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. The majority of pupils struggle to control their emotions. This hinders their ability to engage with learning and those around them. Leaders work with other professionals productively to develop an individual learning plan for each pupil. These plans carefully link together each pupil's academic, social and emotional needs well.

The new leadership team are working with staff to refine the school's curriculum. In some subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge that they want pupils to learn and the order in which it is to be taught. Most teachers use pupils' individual learning plans to inform their subject planning. In some subjects, staff have the knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff work together to share ideas and expertise. This has been particularly helpful for staff new to the school. However, in other subjects, staff's knowledge of the new curriculum content is not secure. Teachers do not routinely plan what pupils need to learn. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in these subjects.

In most subjects, teachers routinely check pupils' understanding. This helps any misconceptions to be addressed quickly. However, in other subjects, teachers do not use assessment information effectively to plan what pupils need to learn next. In

these subjects, pupils' learning does not build on what they know and can do. Pupils struggle to apply what they have been taught to new learning. This hinders the progress that pupils make in these subjects.

Most staff implement the school's behaviour policy. They use effective strategies that support most pupils to manage their own behaviour appropriately. This helps pupils to quickly re-engage with their learning. Pupils behave well in their classrooms most of the time. They are polite and well-mannered when talking to adults. They focus on their learning and take pride in their achievements. There is little disruption to learning. However, some pupils do not conduct themselves well when moving around the school. Their behaviour is particularly boisterous during breakfast time at the start of the day and breaktimes. At these key points in the day, the behaviour of some pupils is not good enough.

Recent training for staff ensures that they have the knowledge that they need to help pupils with their reading. Teachers use a range of strategies to improve pupils' vocabulary knowledge across a range of subjects. A love of reading is fostered well by all staff through the texts that they share with pupils. Books in the newly refurbished library support pupils' learning further. Over time, pupils become confident, fluent readers.

Discussions with staff help pupils to understand the views of others. Wider opportunities to learn outdoors help to promote the importance of resilience, respect and cooperation. Staff help to prepare pupils for life after school. For example, they show pupils how to manage a budget for household expenses. Visits from impartial career professionals encourage pupils to be aspirational for the future. This includes gaining practical qualifications or attending college to study law and politics. However, the curriculum to support pupils' personal development is not fully embedded. Pupils do not routinely apply what they learn to situations that arise throughout the school day.

The recruitment of a permanent headteacher was hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. This led to an unsettled period within the school. The proprietor body ensures that leaders now have the resources and staff that they need to meet pupils' needs well. The proprietor body is beginning to hold leaders to account for the quality of education that they provide. Staff told inspectors that they feel better supported by leaders.

The proprietor body fulfils its statutory obligations. A suitable safeguarding policy is available on the school website. The accommodation and premises at the site are maintained to a high standard. For example, classrooms are well maintained, and the school grounds effectively support pupils' learning outside. There is a suitable accessibility plan in place. All of the independent school standards are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils well. They are especially vigilant when looking out for any subtle changes in pupils' behaviour. They understand the procedures that they need to follow should they have any concerns about pupils. Leaders work with other agencies to ensure pupils who are especially vulnerable have the additional help that they need.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including when they are using the internet when they are not in school. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to use mobile devices responsibly. Pupils told inspectors that there is always someone in school to talk with if they are worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, staff's knowledge of the curriculum is not secure. In these subjects, some pupils repeat topics and themes already taught. This hinders pupils from gaining the knowledge that they need. Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge that they need to deliver all subjects equally well.
- In some subjects, assessment information is not used as effectively as it could be. In these subjects, teachers do not use this information to plan what pupils need to learn next. This hampers pupils' progress. Leaders need to ensure that all staff understand how to use assessment information to help pupils achieve well across all subjects.
- The curriculum to support pupils' personal development is not fully embedded. Pupils struggle to apply what they are learning in other situations. Leaders need to ensure that pupils' personal development is supported equally well in all aspects of school life.
- Some staff do not implement the school's behaviour policy, especially during the times when pupils are outside of lessons. This leads to some pupils feeling unsettled and anxious at these times of the day. Leaders should ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented by all staff so that pupils understand how to conduct themselves appropriately around school.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	136003
DfE registration number	888/6111
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10204104
Type of school	Independent school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Aurora Group
Chair	Sharon Pearson
Headteacher	Karen Thomson
Annual fees (day pupils)	Approximately £41,952
Telephone number	01772454826
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com
Email address	brs-reception@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous inspection	4 to 6 February 2020

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes to staffing and leadership in school since the previous inspection.
- A new assistant headteacher with responsibility for the curriculum was appointed in January 2021.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- The school uses four alternative providers.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with representatives from the proprietor body and members of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with the headteacher, members of the leadership team and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic development and history. Inspectors also reviewed a range of evidence for geography and outdoor education. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons and spoke to staff. They also spoke to pupils about their learning and their experiences of the school. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors considered five responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire, and the five free-text comments. They also spoke on the telephone with two parents during the inspection. Inspectors considered 17 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors had telephone conversations with a representative from the special educational needs department for Lancashire County Council and Wigan local authority.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Eastwood

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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