

# Aurora Brambles School

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

## Inspection dates

12–14 September 2017

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	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Leaders, managers and staff share a common vision for excellence and work tirelessly to achieve this. They care passionately for the welfare and success of their pupils.
- Pupils joining the school often have gaps in their learning because of their behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Once they settle into its caring and nurturing environment, they re-engage with learning and make excellent progress from many different starting points.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils rapidly acquire knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects. This is because teachers design activities which capture pupils' interests so that they learn extremely well.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs extremely well. The balanced focus on academic and vocational subjects ensures that pupils make excellent progress in English and mathematics as well as gaining valuable experiences and qualifications in practical subjects.
- Pupils behave very well and feel safe. Relationships between pupils and other pupils are good and with adults they are excellent.
- Pupils are very positive about their experience of school and appreciate all that their teachers and key workers do for them.
- The school very successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils understand British values and say that they feel well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. However, a minority of pupils lack the confidence to express themselves clearly and openly.
- Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the school is a vibrant and constantly evolving place in which to learn.
- Governance arrangements are highly effective. Directors have a deep understanding of the school's achievements and planned future developments. They provide leaders and managers with the necessary support to continually improve the quality of the school.
- Leaders at all levels, including the proprietor, have made sure that the independent standards are met. A culture of safeguarding pervades the school.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Increase opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to become confident speakers who are able to express themselves clearly.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher provides inspirational and ambitious leadership. In response, staff work diligently and successfully to improve and extend the school's provision and improve outcomes for pupils. Leaders and staff put into practice the 'Aurora Way', which has five core values: 'passion, creativity, integrity, united and excellence'. Leaders, teachers and governors worked well together and have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards.
- Leadership across the school is excellent. The senior leadership team work extremely well together. Senior leaders have defined responsibilities but support each other where necessary. Staff share responsibility for school improvement and ethos and everyone knows that their contribution is valued.
- Successful leadership of teaching and learning has led to consistent improvements across all subjects. As a result, outcomes are improving for all groups of pupils. Staff appreciate opportunities to develop and improve their practice. Performance management is effective in holding staff to account and helping them to continually improve.
- Leaders and managers know their school well and accurately recognise what is working best and where improvements can be made. Planning for the future is exemplary.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is very experienced and has led improvements in the quality of education, health and care plans, and statements. The SENCo also manages the support children of looked after to ensure that their needs are met and that they are making the same excellent progress as other pupils.
- The curriculum consists of an outstanding programme of work and activities suited to pupils and their needs. The school gives equal attention to the core subjects such as English, mathematics, science and information communication technology (ICT) and to vocational learning such as farming and mechanics.
- Leaders offer a highly personalised curriculum, tailored to the needs of individuals, which contributes effectively to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and rapid progress. Opportunities to learn about and understand British values are embedded across the curriculum in subjects such as history, geography and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. Pupils are taught the value of diversity and the importance of respect.
- Outdoor education is seen as equally important as classroom work. All pupils are timetabled for one full day each week developing skills in different sports and outdoor activities. The aim is to develop character, resilience, self-control and discipline. The beautiful grounds in which the school stands, which pupils help to maintain, and the forest area also contribute to pupils' understanding of nature and the environment.
- The parents I spoke with had nothing but praise for the school. This is summed up by one comment, 'It is a pleasure to be involved with this school.'

### Governance

- The Aurora Group provides highly effective leadership and management. The chief

executive expects all the schools in the group to manage their own budgets and to set their own curriculum, while holding them very effectively to account. A regional director oversees the work of the school and visits regularly. The executive team monitor and oversee each school's finance, safeguarding, health and safety and technology arrangements.

- Effective training is provided for staff at all levels as well as support for the development of the senior leadership team. As a result, school leaders have been highly effective in implementing a much-improved progress tracking system to measure progress across the school. The group ensures that the premises provide a bright, stimulating learning environment.
- As part of the inspection, the inspector evaluated the request for a material change to the numbers and age range of pupils for which the school is registered. The Aurora Group has invested in a complete new building, superbly equipped and ready for occupation. A new leader for the proposed junior school has been appointed. Teachers have produced detailed curriculum plans for the prospective pupils. The school has commissioned an external review of safeguarding procedures to ensure that requirements for younger pupils are met. The proposed junior school will have its own assemblies, lunch arrangements and play areas. The school meets the requirements to be registered to take up to 80 pupils aged from nine to 16 years.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. The person leading safeguarding is an experienced social worker who does not have a teaching role in the school. Staff are alert to any signs which might give rise to concerns and are confident in reporting any worries which need to be investigated. Safeguarding training is comprehensive and regular. Safeguarding policies are up to date and take into account current government requirements. These are displayed on the school website. The school has a highly developed and sophisticated approach to ensuring online safety.
- The school has excellent links with outside agencies and is highly regarded by local authorities.
- The site manager has exemplary documentation which shows that all aspects of health and safety are managed correctly. The site is safe, secure and well maintained.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Outstanding**

- The excellent quality of teaching results in outstanding learning by pupils of all ages.
- Teachers share high expectations for the behaviour of pupils and have an exemplary knowledge and understanding of the needs of the pupils in their care. This enables them to plan lessons which stretch and challenge pupils of differing abilities.
- Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and this is seen in the clarity of their explanations and the probing questions they use to extend and deepen learning.
- Pupils are regularly encouraged to put their learning into their own words in order to demonstrate that they really do understand the concepts that are being taught. A minority of pupils still find it difficult to express themselves clearly.

- Learning moves at a good pace. This was seen during the inspection when pupils quickly grasped how grid references help them to identify places on a map in geography. In science, Year 8 pupils were very engaged by a rocket-launching experiment and starting to understand concepts such as propulsion.
- Teaching in the Beacon class is exemplary. This is a nurture class for pupils of mixed ages who suffer from anxiety. Teaching is effectively delivered to pupils across the full age range.
- Very positive relationships and respect are evident in all classes. Generous praise often builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Key workers make a significant contribution to the care, well-being and learning of all pupils. There is very strong teamwork between teachers and key workers. Key workers support pupils' personal and social development throughout the day and enhance opportunities for learning in lessons.
- Mathematics is taught highly effectively and numeracy skills are incorporated into learning activities across a range of subjects. Mathematics and science teachers use many practical examples to help pupils to understand abstract concepts. For example, pupils responded enthusiastically to a 'Smartie' challenge, resisting the temptation to eat the sweets.
- Literacy is promoted very successfully in all subjects. The focus in English is to help pupils understand inference and nuances in language. The school provides one-to-one support for pupils who need extra help in reading or in mathematics.
- Incidents of challenging behaviour are managed extremely effectively. Staff are aware of, and anticipate, anxiety or frustration and act promptly to provide appropriate moments of 'time out' from the learning activity.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Detailed and clear education, health and care plans outline the range of approaches to support each pupil to develop their skills. These plans are used effectively by staff to ensure that all pupils make excellent progress in their personal development.
- Staff and pupils enjoy social time together such as during breakfast club and lunchtimes. Staff are present throughout the day. Pupils report that they feel completely safe and respect and value the work of the staff. They are taught that 'silence is the bully's best friend' and know that they can rely on the support of teachers and key workers. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through many subjects in the curriculum and particularly through PSHE lessons. The school has excellent systems for helping pupils to understand how to keep safe when using social media and the internet. For example, in ICT, Year 7 pupils were starting to recognise the hazards associated with use of the internet and learning what is expected of them by the school in order to use the internet safely. All pupils are required to sign an agreement about how they use social media. They are never left unsupervised when using the internet.

- Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their experience of school. Small classes, consistent treatment and excellent behaviour management make them feel safe and enable them to enjoy school. Interesting teaching enables them to learn well and make strong progress.
- Pupils gain much from the one day each week that they spend following the outdoor education programme. Activities such as orienteering, rock climbing, kayaking, archery and many others allow pupils to experience controlled risk and so increase their confidence, self-esteem, health and well-being. Pupils develop awareness of the value of team-building, leadership and problem-solving.
- Pupils know that their views are listened to and that the school responds to suggestions and requests. For example, pupils requested that there should be a school pet and now two rabbits enjoy the beautiful garden and grounds. Pupils volunteer to feed and look after the animals.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils benefit from continuous, high levels of adult support and supervision. As a result, behaviour around the school is cooperative and positive. Pupils' behaviour is graded after every activity during the day. These points lead to rewards over time.
- School records show a steady decline in the number of incidents of poor behaviour over time. Exclusions are also reducing.
- Attendance rates are average. The very great majority of pupils enjoy school and, for many, their attendance shows a huge improvement compared with their attendance at previous placements.
- Older pupils attending alternative provision are always accompanied by their key workers and so are never left unattended. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain valuable experience and qualifications as they prepare to move on to future training, education or employment.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- A new tracking system set up in the summer of 2016 allows leaders and teachers to measure pupils' progress much more precisely than previously. Analysis of current information shows that across the school, in all subjects, pupils make excellent progress. In English, science, art, physical education, ICT and the humanities subjects, nearly all pupils are achieving or exceeding their demanding targets. In mathematics, roughly four out of five pupils achieve their targets. As a result, standards are rising and teachers are introducing even more challenging work.
- Leaders track the progress of different groups of pupils in the school according to their particular need or ability. Pupils who have previously made a poor start to their education, or who have severe difficulties, make excellent progress. Information on pupils' progress shows that pupils make the same excellent progress whatever their particular special educational need and/or disability.
- The most able pupils gain good GCSE qualifications which enable them to access higher-level courses.

- Pupils in Year 11 gain a portfolio of qualifications, including GCSE qualifications, vocational qualifications and functional skills awards. All pupils carry out some work experience. Each pupil has a personalised programme to suit their need, development and aspirations.
- Younger pupils make strong progress in improving their reading, learning how to decode text and explain context or meaning. Older pupils gain confidence in seeking nuances and inference from text.
- Pupils make strong progress in numeracy so that most are able to take mathematics at GCSE level. Numeracy skills are promoted across the curriculum.
- The majority of pupils develop good communication skills but a minority lack the confidence to express their views openly and clearly.
- Many pupils gain level 1 and level 2 qualifications in subjects such as horticulture, land-based management, construction and motor maintenance.
- Careers education and education for working life begins, in detail, in Year 9. The school works with individuals to help them to decide on what courses will best suit their ambitions and talents. As a result, virtually all pupils go on to further education, training or employment, and are able to take their place in society. In 2016, all Year 11 leavers were settled in different colleges; in 2017, almost all went on to employment, training or further education.

## School details

Unique reference number	136003
DfE registration number	888/6111
Inspection number	10026014

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Aurora Group
Chair	Stephen Bradshaw
Headteacher	Dan Creed
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,034
Telephone number	01772 454826
Website	<a href="http://www.the-aurora-group.com/brambles">www.the-aurora-group.com/brambles</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:brs-reception@the-aurora-group.com">brs-reception@the-aurora-group.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	28–30 January 2014

## Information about this school

- Aurora Brambles School is an independent special day school that provides education for boys aged between 11 and 16. The school opened in September 2009 and in April 2016 it became part of the Aurora Group.
- The directors have appointed a new headteacher and deputy headteacher since the previous Ofsted inspection in 2014.
- The school provides a holistic and innovative education for up to 56 boys aged 11 to 16.
- All of the boys attending Aurora Brambles School have an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs. Their needs are often complex and



include social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Many also have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder.

- In many cases, the pupils have a history of failed and disrupted education placements in mainstream education. This can be a factor in some boys' significant lack of self-esteem and their reluctance to trust and fear of the challenge of attending school. Pupils will have often displayed aggressive and/or anti-social behaviour in the past. The difficulties have frequently led to academic achievement significantly below their chronological age.
- In addition to delivering a broad and balanced curriculum, the school offers opportunities to embrace a range of other learning experiences such as outdoor education and work experience.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school endeavours to promote a culture that recognises, embraces and celebrates the diverse needs of each pupil and to meet the academic, social and health needs of all the pupils, allowing them to feel safe, secure and valued.
- The school uses several alternative providers. Currently these are 4Techmoto Ltd, Preston; The Preston Vocational Centre (PVC) and Country Life Education.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in eight part lessons across a range of subjects. All of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. The inspector listened to pupils in Year 8 reading, attended a school assembly and observed a meeting of the senior leadership team.
- The inspector talked informally with pupils at recreation times, and spoke formally with members of the school council.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders, staff, parents and the regional director of the Aurora Group. She spoke on the telephone with the chief executive of the Aurora group.
- She met the site manager and toured the entire site. She scrutinised documentation relating to health and safety.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work and many school documents. These included records of pupils' progress and attainment, schemes of work, school self-evaluation, the school development plan, policies and procedures and information relating to safeguarding.
- There were two responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). In addition, some parents came into school to meet the inspector.
- The views of staff were gained from meeting several groups of staff and a review of the six responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- As part of the inspection, the inspector considered the school's request for a material change to increase the registered numbers from 56 to 80 pupils and the age range of pupils to include those from nine to 16 years.

## Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2017