

Aurora St Christopher's School

Carisbrooke Lodge, Westbury Park, Bristol BS6 7JE

Inspection dates

10 October 2017

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii).

- The inspection in January 2017 found that standards relating to secondary pupils' careers guidance were not being met. It was reported that they were not receiving access to accurate or up-to-date careers guidance that was presented in an impartial manner to enable them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options and help them to make informed choices.
- Since this inspection, leaders have ensured that the standards for the quality of education are now met.
- They have established an effective link with a specialist careers adviser who provides access to up-to-date and impartial guidance for the young people. Discussions with the careers adviser are carefully planned in advance so that pupils can confidently talk about what their interests are and what they would like to do in the future. The careers adviser provides guidance on pupils' next steps and helps them to develop the skills they need to apply for jobs and write applications for college.
- Leaders are justifiably proud that older pupils are now fulfilling their potential. This is demonstrated by the numbers of pupils enrolled for further education courses at the City of Bristol College at the start of this academic year.
- Leaders have recently created a curriculum which is based around horticultural and food technology skills. This provides a wide range of activities which support the pupils to make informed career choices. For example, they are encouraged to work on mini-enterprise projects, such as collecting apples, pressing them and selling the bottled juice. Other pupils enjoy baking cakes to sell. These activities help the pupils engage in planning, organising, resourcing and working for money.
- New leaders have introduced a range of short courses which successfully supports the development of students' life skills and leads to nationally recognised qualifications in independent living skills, personal development, community participation and preparation for work.
- There is a well-established link with the local library, which provides work experience for some pupils. New links within the community such as working in a local charity shop

have recently been established to support this work further.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(f), and 3(g).

- The inspection in January 2017 found that standards relating to teaching were not met. Adults did not enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they developed their skills and understanding in the subjects taught. It also related to lesson planning, activities, management of class time and ensuring that teaching staff showed a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of pupils.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that these standards are now met.
- Since the previous inspection, the new leaders have developed a three-year curriculum programme. This is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work to meet the ages, aptitudes and individual needs of pupils aged five to 19. These include detailed and comprehensive plans which meet the needs of individual pupils for teaching skills in English and mathematics.
- The newly introduced focus on a horticultural and food technology-based curriculum is being skilfully used as a vehicle to deliver a wide range of subjects. An appropriate emphasis is now given to developing literacy skills, particularly speaking and listening and numeracy. Coupled with this is the strong emphasis on developing pupils' independence as learners.
- The school has recently introduced a new system for assessing pupils' ability on entry and tracking their progress carefully. Although this is in the early stages of development, the evidence already gathered and analysis made is providing teachers and leaders with a clearer understanding of pupils' needs.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 15

- The inspection in January 2017 found that the admission register was not maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- Standards for welfare, health and safety of pupils are now met.
- The attendance register is completed and maintained accurately. Updates are immediately checked by the head of education and regular audits are undertaken by governors.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1) (a), and 34(1) (b).

- The inspection in January 2017 found that the standard relating to the quality of leadership and management was not met. This was because leaders were not able to demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and were not able to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
- The chief executive officer, governors, leaders and managers have demonstrated the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil their responsibilities and have ensured that the independent school standards are met.
- The recent leadership and management changes, coupled with the reorganisation of

roles and responsibilities, have been pivotal to school improvement.

- Leaders and managers are fully committed to helping their young people become independent learners. Linking education with the residential care St Christopher's provides has resulted in a successful change to the culture of the school. Staff now demonstrate effectively a full commitment to 'enabling, empowering and engaging' the young people they teach.
- The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	109342
DfE registration number	801/6008
Inspection number	10040215

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	Independent day and residential special school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Aurora Group
Chair	Stephen Bradshaw
Head of education	Thereza De Lucca
Annual fees (day pupils)	£79,000
Telephone number	01179 733301
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com
Email address	info.stchris@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous standard inspection	23–25 January 2017

Information about this school

- Aurora St Christopher's School is an independent special school. It is situated adjacent to The Downs in a North Bristol residential area.
- The school provides special education for pupils aged five to 19 who have a range of needs which result in severe and complex learning difficulties. The most common diagnoses include autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), global developmental delay, epilepsy

and cerebral palsy. The school provides education for 40 weeks of the year.

- All pupils have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans.
- Year 7 pupils are entitled to receive support using specific catch-up funding.
- A minority of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium fund.
- The majority of pupils are boys.
- Since the inspection in January 2017, The Aurora Group have restructured St Christopher's leadership team and closely aligned education and care provision. An interim principal took up his post in May 2017.
- The school has a very wide range of different spaces, including a sensory garden, sensory room, therapeutic massage facilities, a hydrotherapy pool, ground-level trampoline, climbing wall, horticulture gardens, tricycles, and other therapeutic and leisure equipment. The entire site is currently going through an extensive redevelopment programme.
- The school does not use alternative providers. However, pupils are escorted by members of the school staff when they visit and take part in activities off site.
- The ethos of Aurora St Christopher's is to 'create a stable, caring environment which supports and nurtures the emotional, physical, social and spiritual well-being and development of the children and young people'.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection. This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection since the full inspection in January 2017.
- At the time of this full inspection in January 2017, some of the independent standards were not met. Following that inspection, the school submitted an action plan which was evaluated on 28 June 2017. This action plan was found to be acceptable.
- The inspection was conducted with no notice.
- The inspection focused on the school's progress in those parts of the action plan relating to Parts 1, 3 and 8 of the independent standards. In addition, the implementation of the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils were evaluated.
- During the inspection, the inspector visited classrooms with the head of school and spoke to some pupils informally. The inspector considered schemes of work, teachers' planning and the ways in which teacher performance is evaluated. The inspector also explored how the school guides their older pupils towards the next steps in education and future careers.
- The inspector met with the head of school and the interim principal. Telephone discussions were held with the chief executive officer of The Aurora Group and the designated safeguarding officer.

Inspection team

Lorna Brackstone, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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