

Inspection of Aurora Brambles School

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

Inspection dates:

4–6 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy coming to Brambles. Those who spoke to us said that, for the first time in their schooling, they feel cared for. For much of the time, pupils show respect for others. Staff deal effectively with bullying. Pupils said that they feel safe at school. However, some pupils can be volatile, which can be unsettling for others.

Pupils said that staff often used to physically restrain them. Since the new leadership team was appointed, this is no longer the case. Staff now encourage pupils to reflect on their actions.

The headteacher and staff have high aspirations for pupils. Staff show commitment to pupils developing emotionally, socially and academically. However, some pupils find activities are sometimes too easy or too hard. Because of gaps in their schooling, some pupils are not able to read fluently.

Pupils in Years 6 to 9 like the fact that their form tutors now teach them for a range of subjects. They like being based in their own, separate school building. Several key stage 4 pupils have chosen to attend alternative provision. This gives them the opportunity to study vocational qualifications. Pupils achieve well on horticultural, construction and motor-vehicle courses.

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

The school has undergone changes in leadership in the last eight months. This means that some subject leaders are new to their roles. They are at an early stage in developing their areas of responsibility. Leaders have recently revised curriculum plans. These plans set out the learning that they want pupils to know, remember and use in their future learning. Staff are working together to further improve their planning.

Some teachers are not confident in planning activities for the year groups that they teach. Others lack experience with the subjects that they are now teaching. In some subjects, like mathematics, the curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to deepen their learning.

Several pupils have fallen behind with their reading due to significant gaps in their education. Staff have not had recent training in phonics. They lack expertise in how to provide effective support so that pupils can catch up quickly with their reading. Leaders are considering different phonics teaching programmes to decide which would be the most appropriate for pupils. This is at an early stage of development.

Leaders place a high priority on teaching personal, social and health education (PSHE). Teachers plan PSHE as a single subject on the timetable. They also thread PSHE through the wider curriculum. This aspect of the curriculum helps pupils to develop the skills and aptitudes for life in modern Britain. More importantly, it also

helps them to come to terms with some of the negative experiences they may have faced previously in their young lives.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The vast majority have an education, health and care plan. Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to support pupils and their families.

Some pupils need intense support with their learning. Teachers support and teach these pupils in nurture groups. In the key stage 3 nurture group, pupils have the benefit of the company of Betsy, the therapy dog. On a daily basis, pupils learn to love and care for Betsy, which is beneficial to their personal well-being.

Pupils gain qualifications in English and mathematics. These range from entry level to GCSE. Several pupils undertake a range of vocational qualifications and achieve well. Staff inspire pupils to continue with their learning when they leave school.

Many pupils are polite and well mannered. Several behave well in lessons but this is not always the case. Some do not always move around the school as calmly as they should. Senior leaders, together with an external consultant, have introduced a new behaviour policy. Some staff have reservations about this new way of working. Senior leaders plan to check on the implementation and impact of this new approach.

Pupils appreciate that people have different views and opinions. They learn about different faiths and cultures. Their ability to recall what they had learned was weak. However, they were clear that discrimination is not acceptable.

Most pupils attend regularly. Leaders exclude pupils when incidents are serious. When this is the case, some parents and carers believe that communication between school and home could be better.

The proprietor makes sure that the school meets the independent school standards. The buildings are well maintained. Staff have the resources that they need. Pupils have a place to go if they feel poorly. Ample space outside enables pupils to relax during breaks.

Governors know the school well. They share the headteacher's vision to further develop the curriculum. Governors want pupils to reach their potential. Last year, almost all Year 11 pupils enrolled on a college course. Governors support the new behaviour policy. They want pupils to make appropriate choices in their behaviour towards others. Governors use their skills to provide regular challenge and support for leaders.

Leaders consider staff well-being. Leaders have planned a meeting with staff to discuss the outcomes of a recent staff survey. Most staff feel valued by leaders. Several spoke about their work being demanding but that it is a vocation that they have chosen.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know pupils exceptionally well. Staff are skilled in knowing how to check for signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders check that staff who work in school and at alternative provision are suitable to work with pupils.

Staff teach pupils how to manage the risks that they might face in their everyday lives. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to stay safe, including when using technology. Pupils know that they can speak to an adult in school if they have concerns. Pupils feel safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have led significant changes to the curriculum and how it is taught. Some teachers are not experienced in teaching certain subjects. Some are not familiar with teaching in key stages 3 or 4. Leaders need to provide further training for staff in the areas in which they are now teaching. This will develop their confidence in planning activities to meet the wide range of pupils' abilities and needs and plug gaps in pupils' prior learning.
- Many subject leaders are new to their roles. Leaders are planning training for subject leaders to develop expertise in their areas of responsibility. Leaders need to check that the improved curriculum is being taught as intended. Subject leaders need to check that pupils are progressing through the curriculum as leaders intend.
- The headteacher has identified the need to prioritise reading across the school. Leaders should ensure that staff have training in teaching phonics and early reading. This is to increase the confidence and skills of staff so that they improve their impact on supporting pupils who are struggling to read fluently.
- Leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy. They need to ensure that this is applied consistently by all staff and understood by pupils. Systems are in place to monitor the impact of this policy. Leaders need to identify if this new approach is having the intended impact on pupils taking responsibility for their actions.
- Pupils, together with their parents, are involved in decisions about the support that they need to succeed. They receive termly and more-detailed annual reports on academic and personal achievements. When temporary exclusions are necessary, leaders need to ensure that parents fully understand the reasons for such decisions. Leaders should leave parents with no doubt about the next steps.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 school 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	10128810
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Aurora Group
Chair	Shay Ramalingam
Headteacher	Elaine Strong
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,034
Telephone number	01772 454 826
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com
Email address	brs-reception@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous inspection	12–14 September 2017

Information about this school

- A new interim headteacher was appointed in June 2019 and became substantive headteacher in October 2019.
- The headteacher has formed a new senior leadership team. Most subject leaders are also new to their roles.
- A headteacher from another Aurora school is currently supporting this school.
- The executive principal is the new chair of the governing body.
- New proprietors were appointed last year.
- Currently, the pupils in this school are Year 6 to Year 11 boys.

- Since September 2019, pupils in Years 6 to 9 have been taught in a separate building from key stage 4 pupils.
- Most pupils are taught in their separate year groups. A small minority of pupils are taught in key stage 3 and key stage 4 nurture groups.
- There are three alternative providers being used. They are Preston Vocational Centre, 4Techmoto Ltd and Preston North End.
- The previous standard inspection took place on 12–14 September 2017.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

- We met with the headteacher.
- We considered reading, mathematics, PSHE and food technology as part of this inspection. Inspection activities included discussions with leaders, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their learning.
- We had a tour of the school with the headteacher and a pupil.
- We held a meeting with the chair and the regional leader of The Aurora Group, who is the executive principal.
- We checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the school's single central record. We met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in the school.
- We held telephone conversations with two parents. We also spoke to teachers at alternative provision.
- I spoke to a representative from a local authority who commissions places for pupils at Brambles.
- We considered the responses to Ofsted's survey of staff. We met with staff during morning briefings and informally during the inspection.
- We examined a range of documents. These included the school's policies, attendance analysis and schemes of work.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Barbara Dutton

Ofsted Inspector

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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020