

Aurora Severnside School

A21, Gloucestershire Science and Technology Park, Berkeley,
Gloucestershire GL13 9FB

Inspection dates

6 July 2021

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a)–(b), 2(2), 2(2)(a)–(i), 3, 3(a)–(g)

- The proprietor proposes to open an independent school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties. The curriculum policy sets out the school's vision. The school aims to give pupils the tools they need 'to support their life journey so they can be a success'.
- The curriculum plan includes four layers: a broad and balanced curriculum, support to nurture the development of the 'whole person', extension activities to expand experiences and enrichment activities to foster enjoyment.
- All pupils will have access to a core curriculum to include English, mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In addition, project work will include scientific, technological, human and social subjects. There will also be an aesthetic element to promote making, composing and inventing. Leaders intend that there will be a focus on developing pupils' employability and independence skills.
- Schemes of work set out the essential knowledge that pupils will be taught. The school has been designed with this curriculum in mind, and includes learning resources such as an art workshop, a science laboratory, a media centre and a kitchen.
- Leaders are rightly prioritising the development of a strong reading culture and intend to provide a daily reading time for all. Phonics programmes are in place to support pupils who need to catch up with early reading.
- To support pupils to overcome their barriers and to access learning, the school plans to provide a range of clinical and therapeutic interventions. These will be delivered by the school's own therapy team. Staff will follow a single pupil-centred plan, led by each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school site includes several spaces to provide therapy sessions, alongside the academic curriculum. This is a strong feature of the proposed school's provision and is likely to meet pupils' needs.

- Pupils will be taught in small groups and will be closely supervised throughout the day. The planned approach to learning is to focus on the individual needs of each pupil and to make adaptations to the curriculum to meet these needs.
- The headteacher has plans to link with local businesses, such as the police college and the site café. These are on the school's doorstep and could provide relevant opportunities for work experience.
- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

Paragraph 4

- On arrival at the school, pupils' attainment and specific needs will be checked. Leaders intend to use a range of ongoing assessments to keep track of pupils' progress. Adaptations to pupils' learning and to therapies will be made from these assessments.
- The standard in this paragraph is likely to be met.
- Overall, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5, 5(a)–(d)

- The school aims to instil a strong sense of ambition. Leaders are mindful of the responsibilities to prepare pupils to be successful citizens by exposing them to a broad range of opportunities so that they 'sample new things and become inspired'.
- The school's PSHE and relationships and sex education curriculums are likely to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Through this, pupils will be guided to respect others as well as themselves and to act responsibly.
- The small group and one-to-one teaching arrangements will allow personalised approaches. This will support pupils to explore and discuss values, such as the rule of law. The curriculum policy sets out the expectation that political issues are presented in a balanced manner.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a)–(b)

- The headteacher and the chair of governors rightly place safeguarding procedures and creating a vigilant culture of safeguarding as their highest priorities. The school's safeguarding policy is provided on its website and follows the latest statutory guidance published by the Secretary of State. Systems are in place to ensure that staff understand and can apply this guidance to meet pupils' particular needs.
- Those responsible for leading safeguarding have already had the relevant training. Plans are in place to ensure that all staff continue to receive training and updates so that all necessary safeguarding training is relevant and completed.

- There are systems in place, already used more widely in the Aurora group, for reporting any safeguarding concerns.
- The standard in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Paragraph 9, 9(a)–(b), 10

- The 'promoting positive behaviour policy' sets out the school's approaches and expectations about behaviour. These are based on treating everyone with respect, irrespective of differences or protected characteristics. The focus is on celebrating positive choices and using praise and recognition to build pupils' self-esteem.
- Records of poor behaviour will be recorded on an electronic system, allowing leaders to identify patterns and trends. Leaders also plan to identify triggers so that adaptations to pupils' individual risk assessments and learning plans can be made.
- The anti-bullying policy is clear. It describes different types of bullying and includes information for pupils about how to report bullying. Incidents will be recorded on an electronic system and checked by leaders.
- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

Paragraph 11

- The school's health and safety policies and procedures are all in place and provide the relevant information needed to keep everyone safe.
- The school will have a site manager. The proprietor has ensured that there are robust arrangements for the necessary health and safety checks to be made.
- The standard in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Paragraph 12, 13

- Leaders plan to arrange regular practice evacuations for events such as fires. Fire exits are clearly labelled. The fire-safety assessment is appropriate and meets requirements. Fire equipment is installed, and the required external checks have taken place. This meets the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- There is a first-aid policy which is detailed and appropriate. It makes clear who has responsibility for what. There are first-aid kits situated around the school which are accessible and stocked appropriately.
- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

Paragraph 14, 15

- Leaders have considered the supervision of pupils throughout the day, although they are yet to firm up plans for how pupils will be met at the start of each day.
- Leaders are expecting pupil numbers to increase gradually over the first two years, to allow for gradual recruitment and induction of staff. The school site includes secure areas for pupils to relax and for physical activity. These have been designed to allow effective staff supervision as pupils move around the school site.
- As pupils grow in confidence, the headteacher would like pupils to experience moving around the wider site. Opportunities to use the nearby site canteen, for example,

would support pupils' independence skills. Leaders are aware that this will need careful planning and risk assessment to ensure that it is successful.

- The school will keep attendance and admission registers as required by law.
- The standards in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a)–(b)

- There is a written risk assessment policy in place that sets out the leaders' approaches to creating and evaluating assessments that will help to keep pupils safe. There will be risk assessments for regular activities and visits as well as for one-off trips. There are also assessments to cover risks presented through the curriculum, for example in science and design and technology. Pupils will also have individual risk assessments to ensure that each pupils' needs have been considered and strategies are identified, in order to reduce risks.
- The standard in this paragraph is likely to be met
- Overall, the standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(a)–(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a)–(d), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a)–(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a)–(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a)–(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a)–(b)

- There is an up-to-date single central register which records the employment checks that are made during the recruitment process. Checks include those for medical fitness of staff.
- The proprietor has a robust system in place to ensure that recruitment is managed safely and meets the requirements set out in 'Keeping children safe in education' (2020). Leaders ensure that all necessary checks on staff are completed before appointments are completed.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a)–(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a)–(c), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a)–(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a)–(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a)–(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a)–(b)

- The proposed school is in a recently refurbished building. It is finished to a high standard and is designed with pupils' needs in mind. There are specialist therapy rooms alongside the spacious, well-resourced classrooms.
- All rooms have natural light and are maintained well. The furnishings, acoustics and heating are appropriate. Drinking water is available across the building and is appropriately labelled.
- Outside, there is suitable lighting and large spaces for pupils to relax, and for physical activities. There is a football-pitch-sized macadam surface, as well as covered, quieter areas. Pupils will access swimming facilities at local public swimming pools.

- There is a medical room set aside for the treatment of sick or injured pupils. This has its own water supply and toilet facilities are nearby. The room includes storage for medical equipment and medicines.
- There are separate toilets for girls, boys and staff. Water for sinks is maintained at a suitable temperature.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a)–(j), 32(2), 32(2)(a)–(d), 32(3), 32(3)(a)–(f)

- The proposed school has a website up and running. It includes the required information, such as contact details for leaders. School documents are available for parents and carers to access, including the school's prospectus and key policies such as those for safeguarding, behaviour, remote learning and the curriculum.
- Pupils who attend the school will be funded by a local authority. There are systems in place to provide annual statements showing how funding has been spent.
- The headteacher plans to provide parents with updates about their child's progress towards the outcomes in their EHC plans each term, as well as an annual review of the plan.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a)–(k)

- The complaints policy is available to all parents on the school website. It clearly sets out procedures, including timescales, for following both informal and formal complaints. For example, the policy describes out how the panel will be formed, how outcomes will be communicated and how records kept in the case of formal complaints.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a)–(c)

- The proprietor, group and school leaders have wide experience in teaching pupils with SEMH needs. They show a thorough grasp of how to provide an effective education for pupils with SEMH. Leaders show an appropriate understanding of the independent school standards.
- Leaders have ensured that systems to actively promote the well-being of pupils are in place.
- There is a clear structure for holding leaders to account and for checking that the independent school standards are likely to be met and will continue to be met.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The accessibility and equality plans are detailed and clear. They describe how pupils will access the premises and the curriculum. Leaders have fulfilled their duties under the Equalities Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	148662
DfE registration number	916/6027
Inspection number	10197675

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Aurora ASD Ltd
Chair	Mark Costello
Headteacher	Jon Sillar
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,968
Telephone number	01452 671717
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com/severnside
Email address	severnsideschool@the-aurora-group.com

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	11 to 16	11 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	60	60

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	60
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	60

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	Not applicable	10
Number of part-time teaching staff	Not applicable	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	Not applicable	6

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is seeking to register as an independent special school to admit up to 60 boys and girls with special educational needs and/or disabilities, between the ages of 11 and 16. It is situated in Gloucestershire Science and Technology Park, near Berkeley in Gloucestershire.
- All pupils who will attend the school are likely to have an EHC plan and to be funded by the local authority.
- The proposed school wishes to provide specialist education for pupils with SEMH needs. This includes pupils with communication and behavioural challenges that are associated with autism spectrum disorder.

Information about this inspection

- This pre-registration inspection was commissioned by the Department of Education to establish whether the school is likely to meet all the independent school standards. This is the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector visited the proposed school site and conducted a tour of the proposed school and site, along with the headteacher and chair of governors.
- The inspector reviewed the single central register and a range of school documentation, including documents related to child protection, the curriculum, assessment and reporting to parents. The inspector looked at the school's premises safety checks and policies relating to the independent school standards.
- Meetings took place with the chair of governors who is also a regional director, and the headteacher. The inspector spoke on the telephone to the chief executive of the Aurora Group. The inspector also spoke to a representative from the school commissioning team at Gloucestershire County Council.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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