

Inspection of Aurora Hedgeway School

Rookery Lane, Pilning, South Gloucestershire BS35 4JN

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 March 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that Aurora Hedgeway School is like a sanctuary. Many pupils arrive following poor experiences of education. Staff quickly get to know pupils and their specific needs. Positive relationships underpin the school's success in promoting pupils' personal development, including in the sixth form. Pupils feel and are safe. They learn well because their needs are met effectively. Consequently, pupils are calm, enjoy their learning and interact successfully with their peers.

Staff have very high expectations for pupils. They prioritise preparing pupils for their next steps. Pupils benefit from studying a well-sequenced curriculum that is adapted through personalised programmes. They receive useful and well-considered careers advice, which intensifies in the sixth form. Students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Leaders have worked hard with staff to improve the curriculum and meet pupils' needs with success. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are clear policies that staff follow diligently. Staff secure positive relationships effectively. Discriminatory or unkind behaviour is not tolerated. Pupils' behaviour is managed well. Collectively, this helps to ensure that they develop positive attitudes to learning and about themselves.

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

Leaders are very effective. They have strengthened the curriculum significantly since the previous inspection. For example, reading is now a priority. Pupils benefit from daily reading lessons, including targeted sessions for those learning phonics. Governors challenge leaders well. This helps ensure that leaders know what is working and where improvements are needed.

The school's curriculum is designed carefully and effectively. Staff ensure that pupils' holistic needs are assessed as soon as they arrive. Appropriate pathways and interventions are identified and secured. Strong links between the clinical, behaviour and curriculum leaders ensure that pupils benefit from useful individual programmes of study. These become increasingly personalised as pupils move through the school and into the sixth form.

Leaders have rightly worked on improving the academic elements of provision. Subject planning is now strong and improving. Staff use assessment to check how well pupils are learning. However, the curriculum is more secure in some subjects than in others. The development of subject-specific assessment is overly focused on how well pupils apply what they know at the end of sequences of work. This means that some gaps in knowledge go unidentified and therefore are not filled. Where this is the case, the progress that pupils make is slowed. Nevertheless, pupils do well overall. Improvements to the order in which teachers deliver the curriculum mean that pupils learn well. Older pupils go on to attain increasingly ambitious

qualifications. Students secure well-considered placements in education, employment and training when they leave the school.

Leaders engage with the wider community effectively. Pupils and parents and carers contribute to the development of provision. Parents say that their children are supported well. Many rightly recognise the difference made to their child's holistic development and self-confidence. Staff are positive. They share leaders' ambition. Staff say that leaders consider their well-being, and support them to do better. Consequently, the school continues to improve.

Pupils behave well. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Staff are skilled and know how to support pupils with their needs. They implement the intended curriculum well. As a result, pupils learn to value their place in their school community and their own learning. They take pride in their work. They try hard in lessons because they are keen to please staff, who care about them.

The promotion of pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils benefit from a rounded and considered offer. Curriculum enhancements have preparation for adulthood at their core. Careers advice is woven carefully into pupils' lessons, as well as through bespoke interviews with independent advisers. Staff ensure that pupils have a rich experience of their local and wider community. This includes regular and considered work experience. Pupils discuss beliefs and values through personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Carefully planned opportunities allow pupils to develop independence, self-awareness and self-confidence. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps. They learn to secure positive relationships with their peers as well as staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have clear processes for protecting pupils, as set out in a safeguarding policy that is published on the school website. Clinical and behavioural teams work closely with the safeguarding team to deliver a bespoke offer to respond to pupils' specific needs. Staff receive regular safeguarding training that supports them to identify risks and where support may be needed. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through assemblies, PSHE lessons and discussions.

Safer recruitment practices are secure. Leaders ensure that staff work effectively to complete the appropriate checks on adults, volunteers and contractors.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Subject leaders have introduced processes for assessing pupils' progress against the expectations of the national curriculum. However, these are overly focused on how well pupils apply knowledge when completing higher level activities, such as

writing essays, presenting historical facts or painting portraits. This does not help teachers identify precisely where there might be gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders should review their processes for assessing pupils' knowledge so that they can identify gaps and help pupils reach their full potential across all subjects of the curriculum.

- Pupils learn the curriculum through useful sequences of work. However, a lack of focus on knowledge through these planned sequences of work does not consistently help pupils build knowledge systematically. Leaders should develop some curriculum areas further so that sequences of lessons better enable pupils to know and remember the essential knowledge they need.

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	138563
DfE registration number	803/6009
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10201940
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Aurora Group
Chair	Kim Welsh
Headteacher	Tyne Grant-Rafter
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,299 to £56,208
Telephone number	01454 632532
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com
Email address	aurora.hedgeway@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous inspection	14 to 16 November 2017

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. Leaders have amended the leadership structure of the school. There are now two deputy headteachers, one of whom has responsibility for the curriculum, while the other oversees the welfare of pupils.
- The school uses six unregistered 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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with senior and subject leaders, including the admissions and transitions manager and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors also met with the operational director, who acts as the chair of the local governing body, the quality director and the chief executive officer for the Aurora Group. They discussed leaders' work since the previous inspection, systems for monitoring and accountability, the promotion of pupils' personal development, pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and the curriculum.
- Inspectors did deep dives into four subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE and history. They met with senior and subject leaders, and teachers and pupils. Inspectors also visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work and talked to pupils. They reviewed subject planning and spoke to leaders about other subjects.
- Inspectors analysed 32 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey and the free-text responses from those parents. Inspectors also scrutinised 47 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement, and paperwork relating to the independent school standards. Inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and procedures, including those that relate to the curriculum, health and safety, premises and the Aurora Group.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by meeting with the designated safeguarding lead, reviewing safer recruitment processes, and speaking to staff

and to pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised school policies, governance arrangements, records of concern and links to other agencies.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marie Thomas

Her Majesty's Inspector

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