

Inspection of Aureus School

Candytuft Way, Great Western Park, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 6FF

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff prioritise time to help pupils explore their ideas and their identity. Classrooms are safe spaces where pupils can reflect on the world around them. The Global Citizenship lessons and the different personal development opportunities are valued. Here, pupils debate issues around diversity and equality. They are encouraged to express their concerns as well as taking time to celebrate their own and their classmates' achievements.

Most pupils show kindness and respect to one another. A small minority are beginning to benefit from the additional support provided to improve behaviour, both in and out of lessons. Pupils are confident that bullying, although very rare, is taken seriously. They are confident that staff will listen to their concerns and provide useful support.

Pupils recognise that the expectations of what they can and will achieve have risen. They can see the positive changes being made that are starting to improve the school. Developments are also being made to the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders know how vital these improvements are to ensure that all pupils, including the high number of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans, get the right support quickly.

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

Leaders recognise the frustrations of the school community around the unsettledness of the school since it opened. Further disruption caused by COVID-19 has also added to these difficulties, leading to further delays to the planned improvements. Despite these challenges, senior leaders, with the multi-academy trust, continue to be determined and resilient. Every leader has a clear understanding of what needs to be improved. They are implementing these changes, so that pupils have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

The school's vision combines academic learning with a focus on how to be a global citizen. The significant increase in the number of pupils in Year 10 who are studying the English Baccalaureate subjects reflects leaders' ambition to help every pupil achieve highly. Leaders are rightly proud of the personal development curriculum that pupils are offered. Global Citizenship lessons and extra-curricular opportunities, as well as useful careers guidance, help pupils prepare for the next stage of their education and adulthood.

Leaders are working with staff to improve every subject. These improvements are evident in English. Here, teachers follow a thoughtfully designed curriculum. Pupils read and enjoy many interesting styles of literature. As yet, other subjects are not as well developed. For example, in mathematics, leaders are working with teachers to develop their expertise. This is to ensure that the learning helps pupils carefully build their mathematical skills. Further developments are also needed in every key

stage 3 subject to ensure that teachers precisely check what pupils know and understand. Currently, these assessment processes do not always identify whether pupils have the knowledge they need to move on to new learning.

Staff are ambitious for pupils with SEND, including the high number of pupils with EHC plans. Leaders have put in place an effective process that identifies different needs. Regular training is developing staff's understanding of how to meet these needs. During the inspection, inspectors saw examples of this being used effectively. Provision is also in place to support pupils who find reading more difficult. However, further work is needed to ensure that all pupils gets the right support in every lesson. Leaders know the importance of this and are working with the multi-academy trust and their staff to continue to make improvements.

Leaders appreciate the concerns of some pupils, parents and carers regarding poor behaviour. There is an ongoing focus on making sure that everyone knows and follows the school rules. This is helping pupils to feel that they can confidently and safely learn and play with their friends. Where needed, a small minority of pupils benefit from alternative provision provided by different local organisations. This is helping to improve both their behaviour and their attendance. As a result, behaviour across the school continues to show signs of improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Rigorous safeguarding processes mean that pupils who may potentially be at risk of harm are quickly identified. Detailed records illustrate the actions taken to help keep pupils safe. Leaders also ensure that staff have up-to-date training that ensures that concerns are swiftly reported. This knowledge has been particularly important in recognising where pupils need more support with their mental health.

Leaders have strong links with many different external agencies. They use these to access valuable help for pupils and their families. This includes inviting organisations into school to talk to pupils about their personal safety and well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While the intent for a carefully sequenced curriculum is planned and understood, the implementation of this is not yet consistent across every subject. This means that pupils do not always build on their prior learning to achieve well. Leaders should continue with their plans to ensure that staff have the secure knowledge and expertise to help pupils consistently build their knowledge and understanding.
- While the needs of pupils with SEND are identified, learning is not always adapted successfully to meet these needs. Leaders should ensure that all staff know how

to adapt the daily curriculum quickly to help pupils with SEND acquire the knowledge they need.

- Assessment, particularly in key stage 3, is not yet ensuring that teachers can accurately check how pupils' knowledge and understanding are developing. This means that it is difficult to determine where further support may be required. Leaders should carefully monitor the effectiveness of assessment to ensure that pupils know and remember more across the school's curriculum.
- Behaviour is not always consistently good. At times, behaviour can be disrespectful and disruptive. Leaders must continue to monitor the implementation of systems and processes to ensure that behaviour is consistently positive and respectful.

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 school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140653
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10203176
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	604
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lynne O'Reilly
Headteacher	Julie Hunter
Website	www.aureusschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- There have been changes in the senior leadership of the school since the school opened in September 2017.
- The school is part of the GLF Schools multi-academy trust.
- The school has a higher-than-average number of pupils with EHC plans.
- The school uses four unregistered alternative providers to provide education and support for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 leaders, staff and pupils. They also spoke with representatives from the board of trustees and the School Standards Board (SSB), including the chairs. An inspector also spoke to the chief executive officer and other staff from the multi-academy trust.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, modern foreign languages, dance and physical education. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the 110 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 76 free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors viewed the school's website and policies, met with the designated safeguarding leads, spoke with pupils and staff, checked school records of safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with trustees and governors.

Inspection team

Aimee Floyd, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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