

Inspection of Aurora Redehall School

Redehall Road, Smallfield, Surrey RH6 9QA

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 October 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

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?

Leaders are committed to their vision that Aurora Redehall should be 'more than just a school'. They have created a caring community where pupils achieve well. When pupils start here, staff get to know them quickly and understand their needs. This helps to build strong relationships where pupils feel safe and secure. Some pupils find it difficult to manage their emotions at times, and this is handled effectively by adults in school to reduce instances of unkind behaviour.

Pupils are prepared well for their next steps in life. Some pupils spend time at local colleges in order to make sure they feel ready for the move to further education. Others attend experiences relevant to their ambitions and interests, such as visits to a local farm to learn about animal management. Although these opportunities are valuable, leaders recognise that pupils would benefit from more regular and personalised careers advice.

Parents talk highly of the impact this school has had on their children. One told us, 'The teachers know my child incredibly well. Since starting this school they have literally turned his life around – he has gone from being very angry and school averse to a confident, happy boy.'

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

Many of the pupils who join this school have previously had difficult experiences of education. Many have been excluded from mainstream schools or have not been in formal education for a sustained period of time. Leaders recognise that this means pupils join with a range of different needs and starting points. They rightly place a high priority on understanding each pupil and how to best support them.

Leaders are ambitious for what pupils can achieve. They have made sure that pupils study a broad range of subjects and are seeking to grow this even further in the secondary phase. In the majority of subjects, leaders have planned precisely what pupils will be taught and when so that each idea builds on the last. This planning is less secure in some subjects, including English. Leaders have recently changed the way they assess pupils in reading and writing. Teachers now have access to a range of accurate information about pupils' strengths and any gaps in knowledge. However, this information is not always used well to ensure that the work pupils do in lessons is focused on the areas they need to develop. For example, although the teaching of reading is effective overall and pupils who have fallen behind are helped to catch up, teachers could be more precise when identifying the particular sounds that pupils need to practise.

Leaders have made sure that pupils take part in a range of sporting activities as part of learning about their physical health. Older pupils benefit from access to local parks and leisure facilities where they develop their abilities in sports, such as trampolining, swimming and football. Leaders have also ensured that there are opportunities for

pupils to grow their independence as part of planned trips and visits, including some within the local community or to local colleges. These help to prepare pupils for their next steps and build their confidence in different environments.

Leaders recognise that many of their pupils need additional support with their social and emotional development. Through close working with external professionals, leaders have put in place plans to support each child. They recognise that pupils' academic and emotional needs are closely related. Adults are trained in how to deliver these plans and do so consistently well. Leaders are rightly proud that this approach has led to substantial improvements in the behaviour of individual pupils. Adults manage pupils' behaviour expertly and, as a consequence, disruptions to learning in the classroom are uncommon.

Leaders make sure that pupils attend school regularly. When a pupil is absent unexpectedly or frequently, leaders are proactive in finding out the reasons for this. They continually review information about attendance to inform their discussions about pupils' welfare.

Those responsible for governance have ensured that there are strong systems in place to hold leaders to account. They ensure that schools in the proprietor group benefit from working together to share ideas and expertise. Although their work is effective overall, leaders and governors have not ensured that the most important development areas are prioritised consistently. This includes the further development of the curriculum in English and reading. They have recently introduced a large number of changes. Although staff at the school generally feel well supported, the pace of change has increased their workload considerably. Leaders and governors recognise that recent improvements need time to embed fully.

The proprietor body ensures that the school continues to meet the independent school standards and complies with the relevant statutory obligations. This includes making sure the school has in place and publishes required information, such as an appropriate accessibility plan.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding. They have written a comprehensive safeguarding policy and published this on their website. They ensure that everybody understands the policy and their role in keeping pupils safe. Adults report any concerns quickly and leaders put support in place for pupils and families who need it. Leaders work closely with external agencies where required. Leaders ensure that the proper pre-employment checks are carried out on adults who work with children. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe as part of their programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders and governors do not always ensure that the most important areas are prioritised. Turnover in staffing and the pace at which leaders are driving change have resulted in changes, such as improvements to the teaching of early reading, not being fully embedded. Leaders should make sure that they focus more precisely on those changes that will make the greatest difference to pupils. Those responsible for governance should check that this happens and that progress is being made.
- Some areas of the curriculum are further ahead in their development than others. In some subjects, including English, it is not clear enough exactly what leaders want pupils to learn or in what order. Leaders should ensure that teachers understand how to connect the assessment data they gather on pupils to their planning of lesson activities. This will help to make sure that lessons are more consistently focused on pupils' next steps.
- Leaders have rightly identified a need to grow capacity and stability in their staffing. Where this has been unstable, it has slowed the improvement of some areas, for example careers. Leaders should continue to improve the way they develop and retain high-quality staff so that they can deliver on their ambitious plans for improvement.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144730
DfE registration number	936/6011
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10232321
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	The Aurora Group
Chair	Mark Costello
Headteacher	Mal Fjord-Roberts
Annual fees (day pupils)	£58,596
Telephone number	01342 778650
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com
Email address	mal.fjord-roberts@the-aurora-group.com
Dates of previous inspection	24 to 26 April 2018

Information about this school

- Aurora Redehall is an independent special school located in Surrey. The school currently takes pupils from several surrounding local authorities.
- All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. The majority of pupils have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and associated social and communication difficulties.
- The school received its first full standard inspection in April 2018. It received a successful material change inspection in March 2020 to increase the pupil capacity to 74.
- The school is registered to accept pupils between the ages of six and 19. Currently the pupils on roll are aged between seven and 16.
- The school currently makes use of eight alternative providers, of which two are registered with Ofsted.
- The school operates across two sites:
 - Aurora Redehall, Redehall Road, Smallfield RH6 9QA.
 - Aurora Caterham Education Centre, Francis Road, Caterham CR3 5NR.

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 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 a range of senior staff, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with representatives of the proprietor group and governing body, including the proprietor and chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the quality of education provided in other subjects, including English and physical education.

- Inspectors carried out other activities to check that the school meets the independent school standards. These include a check of the school premises on each site and specific checks of the school's policies and website.
- Inspectors judged the effectiveness of safeguarding by meeting with leaders, discussing records of concerns and speaking with pupils and staff about this aspect of the school's work.
- Inspectors considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys as well as responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Chris Ellison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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