

# Inspection of Aurora Severnside School

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

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Inspection dates: 15 and 17 November 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

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

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy strong relationships with staff. They feel cared for and treated well. They like the good humour that exists between them and staff. Pupils feel safe in the school and know that staff work hard to meet their needs. Pupils say that bullying does not happen and that if it did, it would be dealt with quickly. As a result of the calm approach of staff, pupils behave well. Everybody treats each other with respect at the school.

Many pupils have been out of school for a long period of time. For some, this is the first time they have begun to attend school regularly and engage with learning. Pupils receive good support for their personal development and well-being. Much of this support is delivered by the school's well-qualified therapy team. Both pupils and parents really value their work.

Leaders have begun to develop an ambitious curriculum. However, in some subjects, leaders have not mapped out in sufficient detail how pupils' knowledge should build over time. Consequently, in some subjects pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders work effectively with several local authorities. They also work closely and well with parents who value the work that they do.

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

The proprietor and leaders have worked hard to develop the school's vision since its opening in 2021. They have established a school with a calm and caring approach. The actions of leaders ensure that the independent school standards (the standards) are met.

There has been attention given to developing the curriculum design. Staff use the curriculum as a guide and match learning to meet the needs of pupils. Teachers know pupils well. They assess pupils' learning to know where the gaps are in their knowledge. They then use this information to plan the next steps in learning for them. Pupils work well with their teachers and each other.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. As a result, pupils are generally motivated, enjoy the subjects and work hard. However, attitudes to learning are variable. In classes where the curriculum is well planned and implemented, pupils pay close attention and achieve well. In others, when learning is not considered well enough, pupils do not always persist in their learning. In some subjects, leaders have not yet considered their curriculum design in order to ensure that pupils gain knowledge well over time. This hinders pupils' learning.

Leaders have created a strong focus on improving pupils' reading. For example, silent reading takes place at the start of lessons. Pupils who need to improve their reading

are well supported. Staff provide phonics teaching and a structured reading programme. As a result, pupils begin to read for pleasure.

Pupils study for a range of qualifications. Staff provide a good level of support for pupils to prepare them for the next stage of their education. Careers education is well planned. As a result, all pupils move to college-based courses. Those in the current Year 11 are ambitious for their futures.

Leaders show a strong commitment to pupils' personal development. This has led to the creation of a curriculum that is well informed by pupils' needs. A range of trips and activities support this work beyond the classroom.

Many of the pupils have at some point in their past, shown challenging behaviour. This informs the therapeutic and consistent approach at the school. Pupils feel understood and this helps them to manage their own behaviours. Behaviour in the school is orderly.

Staff feel well supported by the school's leaders. They do not feel overburdened by their workload. They feel that they can speak openly to senior staff. Staff feel they can achieve a good work-life balance, and they like working at the school.

The proprietor has ensured that leaders meet the requirements of schedule 10 of the equality Act 2010. They have an appropriate accessibility plan in place, which is published on the school's website.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. There are good systems and processes for keeping pupils safe. Staff report that they receive regular updates and training in safeguarding. These ensure that staff are alert to any concerns and act on them quickly. Leaders are aware of pupils' changing needs as they mature. The curriculum is well planned and teaches pupils how to stay safe in all contexts. Senior staff have received training to ensure that they recruit staff who are suitable to work with pupils.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The curriculum in some areas is not well designed. Leaders have not clearly identified the important knowledge they want all pupils to know. As a result, some pupils do not learn key content, which hinders their progress. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is well planned and structured across the school.
- The curriculum is not delivered consistently well in all subjects. As a result, pupils do not always build a deep understanding of those subjects. Leaders should

ensure that staff have the knowledge to enable them to implement the curriculum effectively so that pupils learn more and remember more.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148662
<b>DfE registration number</b>	916/6027
<b>Local authority</b>	South Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10230035
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	29
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Aurora Group
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	Kim Welsh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Lynch
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£51,966
<b>Telephone number</b>	01452 671717
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.the-aurora-group.com/severnside">www.the-aurora-group.com/severnside</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:severnsideschool@the-aurora-group.com">severnsideschool@the-aurora-group.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Aurora Severnside is an independent special day school providing education for boys and girls with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is owned by The Aurora Group.
- All the pupils have an education, health and care plan and are placed at the school by their local authorities.
- The school uses alternative off-site provision at Rocksteady and Trinity Music.

## 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 held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with the proprietor through a video link.
- Inspectors examined the school's arrangements for safeguarding by meeting with the designated safeguarding lead. They scrutinised policies, procedures and record-keeping and reviewed the safeguarding checks made on staff when they are recruited. They also spoke with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, digital skills, mathematics, science, humanities and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work, and held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils around the school site, talked with them during lessons and met with them individually.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including policies and record-keeping for behaviour management, incidents, exclusions and attendance.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

## **Inspection team**

Malcolm Willis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Martin Greenwood

Ofsted Inspector

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