

Aurora Woodlands School

Woodlands, Holly Tree Close, Darwen, Lancashire BB3 2NG

Inspection date

12 December 2022

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- Leaders have published a suitable safeguarding policy on their website. It contains references to the most recent guidance from the government. Staff receive effective training to ensure that they know the signs of abuse. Leaders have a rigorous system in place for reporting and recording pupils' safeguarding concerns. Leaders respond promptly when pupils need help and enlist support from external organisations, such as the local authority's children's social care team, when they need to do so. Leaders understand the processes involved in managing allegations against staff, should any arise.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The school's policies relating to health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment are suitable. Leaders put their policies into practice effectively. For example, leaders carry out regular health and safety audits, record their findings and take action to address any issues. There are detailed risk assessments in place which identify hazards and set out methods to minimise any harm that could result.

Paragraph 14

- Leaders have ensured that there is a low ratio of staff to pupils, which enables pupils to be supervised effectively. If the material changes are granted, leaders intend to sustain this low ratio. Therefore, it is likely that leaders will continue to secure appropriate supervision of pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in this part are likely to be met if the material changes are approved and implemented.

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

Paragraphs 18(2)–18(2)(d), 18(3), 19(1)–19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii)–19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6)–20(6)(b)(ii), 21(1)–21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(b), 21(5)–21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c)–21(6)

- Leaders have effective processes for checking the suitability of staff and members of the proprietor body. The single central record contains all the required information to demonstrate the suitability of the proprietor body and employees. Leaders obtain copies of all the necessary documentation to establish the background of staff whom they employ. Leaders make sure that supply agencies have carried out the correct checks on supply staff before they begin work at the school.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in this part are likely to be met if the material changes are approved and implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1)–23(1)(c), 24(1)–24(1)(b), 24(2), 25–29(1)(b)

- There are suitable toilet facilities in place with enough cold water for flushing. There are also washbasins nearby with hot and cold water for washing. The temperature of the hot water does not present a risk of scalding. There are showers and changing facilities for pupils to use when they take part in physical education (PE). Leaders have made arrangements that boys and girls will use these facilities separately, if the material changes are approved. Leaders have plans to create separate showers and changing areas for boys and girls in the near future.
- There is a room that is appropriately equipped for pupils who are sick or need medical attention. There is a separate, lockable toilet cubicle in the room. This contains a washbasin with hot and cold water for washing.
- Leaders maintain the premises to a good standard. Leaders are likely to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils, if the proposed material changes are approved.
- Classrooms have enough space for the proposed number of pupils and have suitable light and acoustic conditions. These rooms are well equipped and furnished.
- Leaders make drinking water readily available to pupils throughout the day. There are labelled sources of drinking water, which are separate from the toilet areas.
- The outdoor area is spacious and suitable for pupils to play and take part in PE lessons. There is external lighting to ensure that people may enter and leave the building safely during the hours of darkness.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in this part are likely to be met if the material changes are approved and implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- The proprietor body has effective systems for monitoring the work of school leaders. Leaders show secure knowledge and understanding of the independent school standards. They are likely to ensure that the relevant standards are met consistently, if the Department for Education (DfE) approves the proposed material changes.

- The policies and procedures which leaders have devised, such as those related to safeguarding and health and safety, are likely to ensure that pupils' safety is secured and their welfare promoted.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in this part are likely to be met if the material changes are approved and implemented.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have a suitable accessibility plan in place for pupils with disabilities who may attend the school. Actions include providing ramps to enable easier access to the building and using information technology resources to help pupils to access information if required.
- Leaders have ensured that this requirement is likely to be met if the material changes are approved and implemented.

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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	138884
DfE registration number	889/6013
Inspection number	10261911

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	The Aurora Group
Chair	Mark Costello
Principal	Mrs Sarah Gregory
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,952
Telephone number	01254 706600
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com
Email address	sarah.gregory@the-aurora-group.com
Dates of previous standard inspection	15 to 17 March 2022

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	10 to 19	Not applicable	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	53	64	64

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Boys	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	52	60
Number of part-time pupils	None	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	53	64
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	53	64
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	53	64

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	35	37
Number of part-time teaching staff	None	None
Number of staff in the welfare provision	None	None

Information about this school

- The school's previous standard inspection was 15 to 17 March 2022.
- The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Leaders use one registered alternative provision and one unregistered alternative provision. The small number of pupils who attend these do so on a part-time basis.
- The school operates from Woodlands, Holly Tree Close, Darwen, Lancashire BB3 2NG

- There are currently very few students in the school who are aged over 16 years.

Information about this inspection

- The DfE commissioned Ofsted to carry out this inspection because the proprietor body applied to make material changes to the school's registration.
- The proprietor body requested an increase in the school's maximum capacity from 56 to 64 and a change in the gender of pupils at the school from boys to mixed. If these changes are applied, they are unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the educational provision at the school. The proprietor body intends to continue to cater for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- This is the first material change inspection that the school has received in respect of these particular changes which the proprietor body has applied to make.
- The inspector spoke with the chair of the proprietor body, the principal and other leaders. He completed a tour of the premises. He analysed relevant documents, including those relating to safeguarding and matters of health, safety and welfare.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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