

Inspection of Aurora Keyes Barn School

Station Rd, Salwick, Preston PR4 0YH

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They know that everyone here has their best interests at heart. Most pupils at the school have experienced many difficulties in their earlier education. The warm welcome that they receive here every day helps them to feel safe, secure, and ready to learn.

Adults have high expectations for pupils' achievement and for their behaviour. Pupils typically listen carefully and work hard. They know that they can ask for help if there is anything at all that they do not understand. Pupils experience success in lessons and achieve well from their different starting points.

Pupils learn to manage their own behaviour well. They follow the rules and routines in school, for example by moving around the site sensibly. Adults respond swiftly to address any issue of bullying. Pupils also treat resources with care, such as books and tablet computers. Pupils' rates of attendance show improvement over time.

There are plenty of opportunities to support pupils' wider personal development. For example, pupils learn about water safety when they visit the coastguard service. They work as part of a team when they participate in football matches with other schools. Pupils understand how to consider the needs of others when they contribute to local and national charitable work. These enrichment experiences help to prepare pupils for life beyond school.

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

Pupils arrive at the school from widely differing starting points. Some have missed substantial amounts of education. All have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have provided a broad, ambitious and interesting curriculum that successfully re-engages pupils in learning.

In each subject, leaders have decided exactly what they want pupils to know by the time they leave the school. Leaders have carefully broken down this knowledge into smaller, well-ordered steps. This successfully helps pupils to build new learning on what they already know and can do. Staff know how to make learning interesting and memorable for pupils so that they stay focused. Over time, pupils typically remember their learning and they achieve well.

In lessons, staff regularly check that pupils have understood the knowledge that they are learning. Staff ensure that pupils' knowledge is secure before they move on to the next steps in learning. Leaders appropriately use the information from assessments to understand how well the curriculum in each subject is helping pupils to learn. This enables leaders to make improvements to the curriculum, when necessary.

There are currently no pupils of secondary age at the school. However, leaders have ensured that an appropriate curriculum for key stage 3 is available for such pupils should any be admitted in the future.

Leaders have put reading at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils have been provided with a wide range of interesting and exciting books to read. They like to choose these books for themselves in their comfortable reading areas. Most pupils learn to read well.

Those pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read have carefully delivered phonics lessons every day. Once admitted to the school, pupils receive appropriate help to catch up on any phonics learning that they might have missed in the past. Typically, pupils learn how to break down letters and sounds, for example when trying to read new or unfamiliar words. However, on a few occasions, some staff do not allow younger pupils the time that they need to blend these sounds back together. When this happens, it prevents pupils from practising the phonic skills that they need to read with confidence and accuracy.

Each pupil at the school has an education, health and care plan. Leaders work with staff to make careful adaptations so that all pupils can access the same well-designed curriculum. Leaders successfully communicate with parents and with a wide range of professionals, such as psychologists and therapists. This ensures that pupils continue to receive the help and support that they need in order to learn and achieve well.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and trusting. These relationships help pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils learn to regulate their own behaviour and to consider the impact of their actions upon others. Leaders' records show that pupils' behaviour successfully improves over time.

Pupils learn about cultures and faiths other than their own. They develop a secure understanding of difference and diversity, for example in family structures. Through discussions and decision-making, pupils learn to take account of the views and rights of others. Pupils learn to care for their environment, for example by making bird houses for the school garden.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive appropriate relationships and health education. They learn about healthy relationships and the changes that puberty brings to their bodies. Should the school admit pupils of secondary age, leaders have put into place suitable arrangements for careers education, and for relationships, health and sex education which follows statutory guidance.

The proprietor body ensures that the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently and securely. For example, the school premises are clean and well maintained. Pupils are provided with a wide range of resources and materials that contribute effectively to their learning. The provision for outdoor play is spacious, attractive and in good order. The proprietor body ensures that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Leaders, including the proprietor body, are considerate of staff's workload in the decisions that they make. Staff appreciate leaders' concern for their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. This training helps staff to recognise when a pupil might be at risk from harm. Staff know how to report any concerns that they might have about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders work well with a range of agencies such as local authority children's services, safeguarding teams and the police. This enables them to secure support for pupils and families who need it.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when they work online. They know who to speak to if they see something that does not look right.

Leaders have provided a suitable safeguarding policy which is published on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- On occasions, some staff do not allow enough time for pupils at the early stages of learning to read to practise their phonic knowledge by blending the sounds that they have segmented. When this happens, it prevents pupils from practising the skills that they need to read words with increasing speed and confidence. Leaders must ensure that all staff allow pupils the time that they need to practise blending sounds so that they learn to read consistently well.

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	135543
DfE registration number	888/6041
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10267643
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 12
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Beechkeys Ltd
Chair	Mark Costello
Headteacher	Dalziel Mcalister
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52958
Telephone number	01772 673672
Website	www.the-aurora-group.com/keyes-barn-school
Email address	kbs-reception@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous inspection	4 to 6 December 2018

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. A new chair has been appointed to the proprietor body.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is located at Station Rd, Salwick, Preston PR4 0YH.

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 that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke remotely to the chair of the proprietor body and spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic education, geography and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. They also spoke with staff to understand how they keep pupils safe.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in their responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments.
- The inspectors spoke with some pupils about school life. They took account of the responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspectors spoke with staff to discuss leaders' support for their workload and well-being. Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

Andy Cunningham

His Majesty's Inspector

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