

Aurora Poppyfield School

Lower Road, Effingham, Surrey KT24 5JP

Inspection dates

6 June 2023

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2A(1), 2(A)(1)(f)

- At the time of the last inspection, leaders had not consulted with parents regarding the school's relationships and sex education (RSE) programme. Leaders have now addressed this omission. A consultation has taken place and parents' responses have been considered. The RSE policy and details of the related programme are published on the school's website.
- Leaders have introduced an RSE scheme of work which maps out the content to be taught over time. Pupils' work indicates that this programme is now a well-established part of the curriculum. Pupils learn about important concepts and issues, such as friendship, boundaries and consent.
- Previously unmet requirements in this part are now met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5, 5(b), 5(b)(v)

- At the previous inspection, inspectors found that pupils had too few opportunities to learn about different cultures, faiths and beliefs. They were not prepared well enough for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have reviewed the programme used to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Subsequent improvements made to the curriculum, while still at a relatively early stage of development, have strengthened this aspect of the school's work. For instance, a religious education programme is used to teach pupils about a world religion, and more opportunities for pupils to engage in activities in the local community have been identified.
- Leaders have introduced a 'cultural calendar' of events to enhance pupils' understanding about special days and festivals celebrated in different cultures and faiths, such as Remembrance Day, Eid and Yom Kippur.

- Previously unmet requirements in this part are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- Safeguarding was found to be effective at the time of the last inspection.
- The school's safeguarding policy complies with current guidance and is published on the school website. The policy provides a range of information about safeguarding procedure. It provides guidance about what to look out for and what to do if a concern arises, including information about how to contact the local authority directly if necessary. It outlines roles and responsibilities clearly, naming the designated safeguarding lead and other key contacts.
- Leaders provide regular training to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding, including about any updates to statutory guidance. Staff record any concerns, no matter how small, on the school's electronic recording system. The school's safeguarding leads check these records frequently, identifying any actions needed and contacting families and relevant agencies as required.
- Safety issues are taught through the school's personal, social and health education programme, as well as through ongoing discussions with pupils as a routine part of the school day. Pupils speak very positively about the school's work to ensure their safety. One pupil said, 'Staff are compassionate. They care about pupils and really try to make a difference.'

Paragraph 9 and 9(b)

- The school has a suitable behaviour policy which is posted on its website. The policy includes a comprehensive range of information and provides a helpful framework to support behaviour management. Leaders monitor behaviour records carefully and are alert to related safeguarding issues.
- The interim principal has extensive experience in behaviour management in special education. He has rightly made pupils' behaviour and well-being a high priority since his appointment in February, saying, 'It's important to get that right if we're going to get learning right.'
- A whole-school approach to managing behaviour is now in place. Changes in the school's culture mean that staff are now more proactive in their management of behaviour. Use of physical intervention has reduced significantly. Pupils say that this is now rarely used, and only when necessary, to ensure everyone is safe.
- The school's success in improving behaviour is clear. During the inspection, pupils moved around the school calmly and sensibly. Those who spoke with the inspector did so politely and with pride for their school. Classrooms were quiet and well organised.
- Pupils are pleased with improvements in behaviour. One pupil said, 'Staff manage behaviour in a respectful manner,' while another commented on the calmer school atmosphere, 'People are not running around anymore. They are now sitting in class and learning.'

Paragraph 11 and 16

- Staff and pupils are supported by a full set of policies, including a suitable health and safety policy and a risk assessment policy.
- The standards in this part continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(b)

- At the time of the last inspection, leaders had not ensured that all independent school standards were met. Since then, they have taken suitable steps to address these shortcomings.
- The approved action plan was well thought out, identifying key actions needed to address the unmet standards. The action plan has now been implemented and all parts of previously unmet standards are now met.
- Leaders are also taking effective action to address other aspects of the school's work identified as requiring improvement at the time of the last inspection. For instance, they have introduced a secure curriculum framework in subjects such as English and are working successfully with families and agencies to support pupils' attendance.
- Governors have established reliable arrangements for monitoring the school's performance. Governing body meetings are used to discuss progress against the action plan and to hold leaders to account. Regular headteacher reports provide regular information about the school's performance. The chair of governors uses school visits to check that reported improvements are evident in practice.
- Leaders have used an external adviser to support developments since the last inspection, as well as experienced staff from other schools in The Aurora Group. The interim principal has secured important improvements in the quality of teaching, as well as in pupils' behaviour.
- Recruitment and staffing difficulties had led to a challenging time for the school at the time of the last inspection. The school is now benefiting from a more settled phase. Leaders have made a number of key appointments recently, including appointing a new head of school who will start in September. She is already working alongside the interim principal to ensure a smooth transition.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

Part 1: Quality of education provided

- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor—
 - (f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e).

Part 1: Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor—
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which—
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.

Part 8: Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

School details

Unique reference number	148930
DfE registration number	936/6056
Inspection number	10284673

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Beechkeys Limited
Chair	Phil Jonas
Headteacher	Kevin Parker (interim principal)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£66,038
Telephone number	01372 678630
Website	www.theauroragroup.co.uk
Email address	hollie.riley@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous standard inspection	11–13 October 2022

Information about this school

- The school provides full-time education for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils attending the school have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. Many have additional behavioural and/or communication needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Most pupils are placed at the school by Surrey local authority.
- There have been many changes of staff and leaders since the school opened. The former substantive headteacher left the school in September 2022. An interim principal was

appointed in October 2022. The current interim principal was appointed in February 2023. The pastoral lead joined the school in May 2022.

- The proprietor, Beechkeys Limited, is a subsidiary of The Aurora Group.
- The four members of the governing body are senior leaders from The Aurora Group. The governing body reports to the chief executive officer. The chair of governors acts as the chair of the proprietor body.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the last standard inspection. It was carried out with no notice.
- The DfE required the school to prepare an action plan as a result of non-compliance with the independent school standards identified at the time of the last standard inspection in October 2022. This was evaluated and accepted by the DfE in February 2023.
- The inspector met with the interim principal and other leaders. She spoke with teachers and other members of staff and had a telephone conversation with a governor.
- The inspector toured the school site and visited a range of lessons with the interim principal. She also had a discussion with a group of pupils.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including documents relating to safeguarding. The inspector also checked the single central record.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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