

# Inspection of Aspire Learning

Coombe Cliff, Coombe Road, Croydon CR0 5SP

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Inspection dates: 8 to 10 May 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

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

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

Pupils enjoy coming to this school because they feel safe and trust that staff will look after them well. Small-group and one-to-one individualised learning enable staff to meet the needs of each pupil, build strong professional relationships and support pupils' learning needs. As a result, pupils who may have typically found it difficult to settle into other school settings are much happier to come to this school than previous schools.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. Staff work with pupils to help them achieve their personal goals and prepare them for the next stage of their education, training or work. Leaders place a high priority on improving pupils' communication and language skills, including reading and writing. Equally, leaders make sure that all pupils develop their mathematical skills, building step by step on their different starting points. The positive impact of leaders' recent actions can already be seen on pupils' outcomes.

Pupils behave well in lessons and in the playground. Staff teach pupils how to understand their emotions so they can express how they are feeling. Staff use visual images with those pupils who do not yet communicate verbally. If pupils show signs that they may be anxious and may struggle emotionally, staff intervene quickly and effectively to support them.

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

The school has designed a curriculum that is broad, meets the requirements of the independent school standards and aims to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to cover the subjects in the national curriculum and personalise the curriculum to the needs of individual pupils. Staff assess pupils' prior knowledge and recall when they arrive at the school so that they can identify any gaps in pupils' learning. This helps staff to adapt their teaching to meet the specific needs of pupils, for example by initially focusing on securing pupils' understanding of place value in mathematics.

In most subjects, the school has ordered the teaching of subject knowledge in a way that allows pupils to build on their prior learning and progress to more complex ideas over time. For example, in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils are encouraged to live healthy lives through physical exercise and a healthy diet. Pupils in the secondary phase use this knowledge to design health and fitness plans for themselves. However, this curriculum thinking and sequencing is not equally secure in all subjects. Where leaders have not thought about the key knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember, or the order in which they should learn it, some pupils sometimes find it hard to apply what they already know to attempt more complex concepts.

Generally, staff check whether pupils have understood new knowledge correctly and they intervene to correct misconceptions when they occur. Typically, this ensures

that pupils are ready to build on what they know and develop their knowledge and skills further. However, where checks on pupils' knowledge are not as routinely in place, staff are not as securely aware of what pupils know and understand and whether they are ready to move on to new learning.

Leaders use information contained in pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) to adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs. In addition, leaders identify any additional needs and check whether pupils' needs may have changed. Regular checks ensure that staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs and where they are in relation to their long-term targets.

Reading is treated as a priority in this school. This starts with building pupils' social interaction, language development and communication skills. For those pupils who are ready to learn to read, leaders have a phonics programme in place. Staff receive ongoing training on using this phonics programme to teach early reading effectively. Pupils read books that match the phonics sounds they know. This enables pupils to become accurate and fluent readers.

Every pupil has a personal behaviour support plan. This sets out the individual needs of pupils, identifies situations that might trigger pupils' anxieties and suggests how to mitigate these. These plans are reviewed following any incident where the planned strategies have not been fully effective. Pupils are motivated to behave well by the school's 'token' system. Often, pupils have not attended their previous school setting regularly. Leaders use a range of effective strategies that encourage pupils to attend school regularly, and these are having a positive impact.

The school's provision for pupils' wider development is exceptional. Through the assembly programme and PSHE lessons, pupils are taught about the diversity of Britain, including different religions. Leaders have planned educational visits into the school curriculum that help to re-engage pupils in their learning. For example, pupils visit museums as part of their studies in science and history. All pupils also participate in extra-curricular activities, including a variety of open-air activities at a local outdoor centre during the school day. When pupils are interested or talented in a certain area, leaders build this into their programme to deepen their engagement. Leaders have developed a careers programme that supports pupils with decisions about their next stage of education.

The proprietor body has a clear vision for the school and this is shared by school leaders and staff. The proprietor body has clear structures in place to hold school leaders accountable and to identify the strengths and any relative weaknesses of the implementation of their vision. Staff receive good-quality training and feel very well supported in their roles. Parents and carers value the daily feedback they receive from class teachers and teaching assistants on their children's learning.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In some subjects, leaders have not thought through all the key knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember or sequenced the teaching of key content in a way that allows pupils to build on prior knowledge step by step. As a result, pupils do not build knowledge as securely as in other subjects and gaps or misconceptions may arise. The school should ensure that all subjects are equally well thought through and sequenced with clear end points so that pupils build cumulative knowledge equally securely over time.
- The school has not decided equally well how it will assess pupils' learning in all subjects. This means that awareness of whether pupils have understood the key knowledge and skills the school wants them to remember is variable across subjects. The school must ensure that assessment in all subjects enables staff to know whether pupils have secured their understanding of key content before moving on to more complex ideas.

### 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>	149444
<b>DfE registration number</b>	306/6030
<b>Local authority</b>	Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322612
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	31
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Horizon Care and Education Group Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Amanda Cunningham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Abigail McIvor
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£72,050 to £102,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 4501 4941
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.horizoncare.co.uk">www.horizoncare.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:abigail.mcivor@horizoncare.co.uk">abigail.mcivor@horizoncare.co.uk</a>

## Information about this school

- Aspire Learning provides education for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, for example social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The primary provision of Aspire Learning is located at Coombe Hill, Coombe Road, Croydon, CR0 5SP. The secondary provision is located at Denmark Hall, Denmark Road, London, SE25 5RE.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school opened in April 2023.

## 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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgment about the quality of a school's education provision.

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 the headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the pastoral leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the chair of the proprietor body and other directors of Horizon Care and Education Group Ltd. Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school to check compliance with the independent school standards. They also toured the school's premises at both sites.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and PSHE. Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors also considered pupils' learning in other subjects such as science, history and physical education.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtimes was observed.

- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and staff workload. Inspectors looked at parent responses to Ofsted's survey.

### **Inspection team**

Mark Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Phil Garnham

His Majesty's Inspector

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