

Inspection of Aurora Poppyfield School

Lower Road, Effingham KT24 5JP

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 May 2025

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a nurturing and inclusive school where pupils are supported to engage with learning in a meaningful and personalised way. A strong culture of understanding and belonging runs throughout. Staff and pupils recognise and celebrate individual differences.

Relationships are fundamental to the school's success. Staff invest time and care in building trust. This underpins the school's calm, respectful and purposeful environment. The school has identified the specific times in the school day where pupils particularly struggle to maintain positive behaviour. They have carefully crafted the timetable to combat this and support pupils to be successful.

Pupils are well supported to develop confidence and resilience. There is a robust emphasis on understanding each pupil's unique social, emotional and academic needs. The highly individualised approach is recognised by staff and pupils alike. As a result of the school's work, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This includes helping pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe online and in the real world. Staff are acutely aware of the specific risks that pupils here may encounter. They adapt the curriculum offer and provide bespoke support to counter these risks and equip pupils for life beyond the school gates.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully adapted the curriculum. It has carefully considered what pupils need to know and remember in order to be fully prepared for their next stage of education. Staff have a strong understanding of pupil's individual special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and tailor learning in order to meet these. Many pupils have had fragmented experiences in school prior to coming here. There are robust systems in place to help staff to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and adjust tasks to close these. However, sometimes staff do not choose the most effective methods to deliver new learning.

Pupils are well supported to identify their own aspirations. The school works closely with pupils to help them to understand what qualifications they may need in the future. Staff are highly ambitious for the pupils and help them to take the steps they need to achieve their goals. The curriculum is successfully sequenced to allow pupils to keep their options open for as long as possible. Staff provide appropriate support to enable pupils to secure the skills they need for their post-16 education as well as adulthood. The school's careers programme enhances the curriculum offer.

The school has made sure reading is prioritised. The school is determined that every pupil will learn to read and have the essential English skills needed for daily life. Staff are expertly trained in the delivery of phonics. They help pupils to build confidence when learning to read. They ensure that pupils are exposed to a range of texts. This helps to foster a love of reading.

The school has precisely identified what can help pupils to maintain positive behaviour. As a result, staff have an excellent awareness of each pupil's needs and how best to support them socially and emotionally. Throughout the school there is a constructive atmosphere for learning. Sometimes pupils struggle to regulate their own emotions but they are given the right help to manage this. Many pupils had poor attendance prior to joining the school. The school works hard to engage pupils in education and offers effective support for families to help pupils attend school. For some pupils this has resulted in clear increases in attendance but there are still a number of pupils who do not attend school regularly.

There is a strong emphasis on broadening pupils' horizons and understanding the wider world. Lunchtime clubs provide pupils with opportunities to try different things such as hair and beauty or games. Pupils are eager to discuss trips and visits organised by the school. They relate these to their own experiences and learning. Class ambassadors take their responsibilities seriously and act as positive role models for their peers. The personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to build a growing awareness of how to be healthy and safe.

Leaders use a rigorous and thorough approach to checking the quality of the school's provision. This means that the proprietor and governing body have a robust overview. They know the school's strengths as well as the areas for development and provide appropriate support around these. They ensure that the independent school standards are securely met. Leaders are determined to provide the best possible education for pupils. The school adheres to 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)

- Staff do not always use the most effective pedagogical approaches during lessons. This means that sometimes pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should continue to train staff to understand and utilise the best approaches when presenting information and content.
- Attendance remains persistently low for some pupils. As a result, these pupils develop further gaps in their learning. This hampers their achievement. The school should continue to address this using their renewed systems and maintain a rigorous approach.

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	148930
DfE registration number	936/6056
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10375011
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Proprietor	Beechkeys Limited
Chair	Sharon Pearson
Headteacher	David Thomas (Principal) Jade Nairne (Head of school)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,806
Telephone number	01372 678730
Website	www.theauroragroup.co.uk/services/schools/poppyfield-school
Email address	Poppyfieldschool@the-aurora-group.com
Date of previous inspection	10 to 12 October 2023

Information about this school

- The school provides full-time education for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 with SEND. 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.
- The proprietor, Beechkeys Limited, is a subsidiary of The Aurora Group.
- Some members of the governing body are also members of the proprietor body and/or senior leaders from The Aurora Group.
- The head of school commenced her role in September 2024.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school's last standard inspection was in October 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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, head of school and other leaders and staff. The lead inspector held a meeting with three representatives of the proprietor body including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and art and design. To do this, they met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- 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.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- Inspectors toured the school site to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school's website.

Inspection team

Sara Staggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andy Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025