

Aurora Rowan School

Address: Dysons Wood, Tokers Green, Reading, RG4 9EY

Unique reference number (URN): 151119

Inspection report: 3 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.
- **Insufficient evidence:** Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

When pupils join the school, they have substantial gaps in their communication, learning and regulation skills. Leaders address this as soon as they possibly can. As a result, the school has ensured that gaps are being very well addressed by a curriculum and assessment system that focuses sharply on gradually rebuilding these key skills. The school's play-based, developmental approach ensures that pupils develop key learning behaviours, such as increased engagement, attention and interaction in tasks. This helps pupils to form the foundations for academic learning. Staff understand pupils' profiles well and use highly individualised developmental plans, reviewed weekly, to ensure that learning builds in precise, incremental steps. As a result, no time is wasted in aiming for pupils to achieve the next step that they are capable of. Pupils make excellent progress both pastorally and academically, given their highly complex needs.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Despite typically having low attendance rates at their previous schools, pupils' attendance after joining this school is excellent. Leaders set a clear expectation for pupils and families that they need to come to school on time each day, and leaders do all they can to ensure that this happens. However, if a pupil's attendance starts to cause a concern, leaders respond very effectively. They will draw on expertise from outside agencies, as well as work very closely with families, to ensure the pupil returns to school as soon as possible.

Behaviour is very well supported through an individualised, proactive and relational approach. The school's pastoral team works in unison with classroom staff. This helps to ensure that all staff have the skills to know how to avoid pupils becoming unsettled or how to calm them quickly if they do. Staff manage rare, high-level behaviours with professionalism. Staff implement pupils' morning routines with precision. Staff meet pupils immediately on arrival with visual 'now and next' boards, establishing predictability for the pupil and reducing any anxiety. Pupils settle quickly into well-prepared classrooms in which sensory circuits, familiar materials and personalised routines help regulate their behaviour.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is expertly designed for pupils with significant developmental gaps. The curriculum aims to build the key knowledge and skills the pupils need, including the clear focus on early reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum also ensures that pupils get a full breadth of learning, including physical development and creative opportunities. There is an increasing focus on ensuring that the older pupils in school learn key life skills too, such as understanding money and how to prepare food safely. Teachers ensure that pupils' individual development plans reflect their high ambitions for what pupils can do and what they need to learn next.

Classroom staff have the knowledge and skills required to support the pupils' learning very effectively. They ensure that pupils are ready to learn before they engage them in a learning task. Leaders have ensured that the environment is language rich. Words are displayed

everywhere, whether spoken, written or signed. Pupils learn to create simple sentences through highly effective use of classroom resources. Staff use visual supports and sensory equipment effectively in order to keep pupils engaged in the activity. This enables them to learn phonics or practise simple counting and sequencing very effectively.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders rightly place inclusion at the heart of this school. The provision is very well led and highly coherent. There are clear systems in place that ensure pupils' needs are accurately understood and effectively met. Many pupils have further barriers beyond their diagnosed special educational need and/or disability, such as being known or previously known to children's social care. A highly structured and considered admissions process enables pupils to feel part of the school swiftly. This strong start means that staff can quickly get to know the pupil and their needs.

A key strength of the school's practice is the precise mapping of what pupils need to learn next and how this will be achieved, both pastorally and academically. The whole team works together. Leaders, staff, therapists, parents and carers, external agencies and the pupil's own voice ensure there is a highly personalised approach for each pupil. Each pupil's next steps are tracked and evaluated with precision. Staff monitor daily the progress made towards meeting these individual targets. Should this process highlight that a pupil's needs are changing, leaders arrange team meetings swiftly to address sensory or emotional needs. This creates a highly responsive and adaptive system of support.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

The proprietor has established a strong, values-driven culture in which pupils' developmental stages, communication needs and emotional well-being shape every aspect of the school's provision. Onsite leaders ensure this is enacted as expected. This is done through high levels of visibility, support and modelling of positive approaches by leaders. This creates a culture where staff feel trusted, guided and well equipped to meet pupils' complex needs.

The oversight from governance is strong. In the short time the school has been open, they have ensured that pupils' needs and interests are put first by rapidly embedding the expected policies and procedures. As a result, the school is already operating as a well-established, cohesive community. Governors ensure that all of the independent school standards are consistently met. They have ensured that pupils are safe, well educated and that the school has the resources it needs. They are equally mindful to ensure that the school has the capacity to develop the quality of its provision even further.

The proprietor and governors are fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure staff's wellbeing and individual development. Staff induction and ongoing training are meticulous, so no time is wasted on helping to support the pupils appropriately. A positive team ethos oozes through the school and is underpinned by leaders' genuine focus on ensuring that all staff are supported in whatever way they may need. This is not lost on parents and carers,

who are overwhelmingly grateful for everything the school team does to help their children each and every day.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The school provides a highly effective and well-sequenced personal development offer. This helps pupils to develop the key skills they need to prepare for life after school, including the world of work. Critical to this is the school's excellent therapeutic offer to support pupils' mental wellbeing. Leaders ensure that speech and language and occupational therapy operates throughout each school day and are embedded in classrooms. As a result, pupils are becoming far more confident at communicating with others and increasing their independence. Leaders openly engage with parents and carers to ensure the benefits of this strong pastoral work are seen in all aspects of pupils' lives.

Staff demonstrate an acute awareness that pupils' physical development may outpace their cognitive development. As a result, staff adjust their teaching to ensure pupils can access essential knowledge and understand important values about growing up safely and appropriately. There is a sensitivity to ensure that pupils learn about their changing bodies and how they should care for themselves, such as around personal hygiene. Pupils learn to say no in a respectful way if they don't like something or want it to happen. This is giving them an understanding of consent. Physical development is also well promoted. Free-flow learning ensures that pupils move regularly, sensory circuits improve pupils' regulation and body strength, and well-chosen equipment supports pupils' individual physical needs.

The school is keen to ensure pupils learn about the world outside the school boundaries. Pupils experience a 'cultural week' each term to celebrate pupils' diverse backgrounds, which enables them to recognise their uniqueness and appreciate the diversity represented in their community. Staff expose pupils to typical life experiences to slowly ease any anxiety around them that pupils may have. For example, pupils visit local shops, cafes and a local farm to help them understand how to interact respectfully with members of the public and experience more unpredictable situations.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

School days begin with the calm, predictability and care that the pupils at Aurora Rowan School need. This structure helps them to feel safe and secure immediately. Pupils attend school well. They are warmly greeted on arrival and swiftly move to their classrooms, where their routine continues. Classrooms are well prepared so that pupils can transition smoothly into meaningful activities tailored to their individual needs and interests.

Learning is shaped entirely around how each pupil learns best. Many pupils arrive with significant developmental gaps, so leaders place play-centred learning at the heart of its curriculum. Through carefully planned exploration, repetition, interaction and hands-on experience, pupils build the core learning they may have missed previously. Therapeutic support is embedded deeply in daily life. Speech and language therapists and occupational therapists work alongside teachers, ensuring highly appropriate strategies are utilised in

classrooms. They help develop a calm, structured and communication-rich environment that enables pupils to communicate needs confidently and access learning with dignity.

Pupils have their achievements celebrated at every turn. Depending on what works best for each pupil, they receive 'high-fives', tokens, praise, messages home and weekly certificates linked to the school's values. This creates a highly positive atmosphere where there is absolutely no sense of unkindness between pupils. Beyond the classroom, pupils learn essential life skills in real-world contexts. Depending on their level of development, they may visit shops, travel within the community, attend farm-based sessions and practise organisational skills, such as managing money and personal items. As pupils grow older, they begin to explore the world of work through a structured careers programme that is totally relevant to their needs. Opportunities such as 'The Minty Express', a school-run enterprise, provide authentic experiences of budgeting, purchasing and delivering items, helping pupils prepare meaningfully for adulthood.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the school continues to develop its academic and pastoral support to make embedded and transformational changes for its pupils.
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About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this standard inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, chair of the proprietary board, governors, including the chair, and representatives of local authorities who place pupils at the school during the inspection.

The name of the proprietor is Beechkeys Limited. The chair of the proprietary board is Sharon Pearson.

The fees currently charged are £95,000.

The email address of the school is rowanschool@theauroragroup.co.uk.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

Pupils attending the school have severe learning difficulties and a diagnosis of autism.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

The school operates from a single site at Dysons Wood, Tokers Green, Kidmore End, Reading RG4 9EY.

The school admitted its first pupils in November 2024.

The school currently has 24 pupils on roll, with a capacity of 30 pupils.

This is the first standard inspection of the school since it was registered by the DfE in October 2024.

Headteacher: Lesley Walkden

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

1. Quality of education provided	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

5. Premises of and accommodation at schools	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

6. Provision of information

Standards met

All standards have been met.

7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Standards met

All standards have been met.

8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Standards met

All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:

Chris Parker, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Louise Ling, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 3 February 2026

Total pupils

24

School capacity

30

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

Insufficient evidence

Inspectors were unable to gather reliable enough evidence to grade an evaluation area. This is rare and normally only happens if there are no pupils on roll at the school.

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