

INSPECTION REPORT

INSPECTION CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO SECTION 162A OF THE EDUCATION ACT 2002

Name of school:	Botton Village School
DCSF number:	815/6023
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley Supporting Inspectors: Mrs Meg Buckingham Mr Mike Thirkell Lay Inspector: Mr Ewout van Manen
Dates of inspection:	13 to 15 October 2009

CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

Section A: Introduction and summary

Section B: Compliance with regulations for registration

Section C: The quality of organisation and management

Section D: Early Years Foundation Stage

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: Botton Village School

Address of the school: Danby,
Whitby,
North Yorkshire, YO21 2NJ

Telephone number: 01287 661206

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Email address: admin@bottontvillageschool.co.uk

Proprietor: Eskdale Community Trust for Education Limited

Name of the Chair of the College of Teachers: Mr Michael Drake

Name of the Chair of the Trustees: Mr David Adams

Name of Administrator: Mr Michael Drake

DCSF number: 815/6023

Type of school: Independent school affiliated to the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship

Age range of pupils and students: 3 to 14

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll:	(Full time)	Boys: 31	Girls: 23
	(Part time)	Boys: 0	Girls: 2

Number of children under 5: Boys: 3 Girls: 4

Annual fees: No fees are charged: families contribute according to their means

Type of inspection: Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Inspection Team:

Reporting Inspector:	Dr Martin Bradley
Supporting Inspector:	Mrs Meg Buckingham
Supporting Inspector:	Mr Mike Thirkell
Lay Inspector:	Mr Ewout van Manen

Dates of inspection: 13 to 15 October 2009

PART A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service in accordance with Section 162(A) (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by the Service and the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship, and agreed with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). It was conducted by independent professional inspectors who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations. The professional inspectors were accompanied by a trained lay inspector who looked at agreed aspects of the school's management and ethos and reported on these to the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship. His findings are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection process.

Information about the school:

Botton Village School was founded in 1960 and has close links with Botton Village Camphill Community, including using some of the Village's community facilities and receiving some funding from them. Since the 1970's the school has taken pupils from the wider community as well as from families in Botton. At the time of the inspection about two-thirds of the pupils came from the wider community. The school follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and is managed by a College of Teachers which reports to the Eskdale Community Trust Educational Council, a charitable trust. No fees are charged by the school; instead families make contributions according to their means. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational need.

The school follows the Steiner Waldorf system for naming classes. The corresponding National Curriculum names for the classes in the school at the time of the inspection are:

Steiner class names	National Curriculum
Kindergarten	Nursery, Year R, Year 1
Class 1 and 2	Years 2 and 3
Class 3 and 4	Years 4 and 5
Class 5 and 6	Years 6 and 7
Class 7 and 8	Years 8 and 9

Summary of main findings:

The overall quality of education is good and the school has made progress in relation to the issues identified during the last inspection. The quality of teaching is good overall. The pupils acknowledged the high quality of the care provided by the staff and commented that they appreciated the support provided by the staff. Relationships throughout the school are good and they are outstanding in the kindergarten. The school follows the Steiner curriculum, adapting it effectively to meet its organisation into classes. At the time of the inspection there were four mixed age classes and a kindergarten. All pupils make good progress relative to their age and ability.

What the school does well:

- its teaching is good throughout the school and meets the needs of pupils of all abilities;
- the relationships between pupils and staff and between pupils are based on mutual respect for each others' feelings and care for pupils' personal development;
- its partnership with parents in the kindergarten is outstanding;
- its pupils' behaviour is particularly good, supported by effective classroom management; and
- its pupils respond well to lively and well paced lessons, particularly in French, German and music.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

- ensure that all aspects of the school's policy for staff recruitment and attendance registers comply with regulation as identified in Section 3 below.
- ensure that all aspects of the appointment of staff comply with regulation; and
- devise a written policy on exclusions.

Next Steps:

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- establish clearer written development planning to identify priorities and ensure that issues are fully addressed; and
- develop a written assessment policy with appropriate guidance to promote learning and linked to effective tracking of the pupils' progress.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school successfully achieves its aim of providing a curriculum based on the principles of Steiner Waldorf education. The overall quality of the curriculum is satisfactory and has several good features. All the required areas of learning - linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative - are in place. They are principally represented in the Main Lesson which takes place for around two hours each morning. These sessions clearly affirm the school's integrated approach to pupils' learning. The timetable is organised to reflect the underlying principle of the set pattern or rhythm of each Main Lesson and the other sessions in the day. Mixed aged classes are managed effectively. Besides English, mathematics and science, pupils have lessons in physical education (PE), eurythmy (a form of dance), music, art and hand work. In addition, all pupils are taught both French and German, except class 1 and 2 who currently only have French. The curriculum takes account of pupils' individual needs and ages and enables them to make progress in their learning and to acquire basic skills. It prepares them successfully for the next stage of their education.

Pupils have good opportunities for practical designing and making, for example, with wood and fabric but the school does not make provision for information and communication technology. Pupils' creative and aesthetic experiences are particularly strong with very good music, lively modern foreign language teaching and the daily focus on stories and poetry.

Planning is satisfactory with written termly outline plans that list the topics to be covered in the Main Lesson and in discrete subjects. Some plans helpfully include learning objectives for literacy and numeracy but details of assessment and of the skills to be acquired are not consistently noted. Currently, each of the four classes spans at least two year groups, but the written planning does not take this into account sufficiently to cover a two year cycle clearly.

The units for Main Lessons follow those indicated for year groups in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Teachers have the flexibility to choose the content relevant to the pupils, their needs and the mixed age groups. For example, Class 3 and 4 made good use of the local environment with a visit to a nearby farm to pick potatoes for their topic on farming. This experience was used to reinforce pupils' measuring skills effectively.

Aspects of personal, social and health education are to be found across the curriculum and within the ethos of the school. They are satisfactory overall, and social education is good. In the context of this school the provision of appropriate careers guidance in broadest terms is adequate. The school does not have the Steiner Waldorf 'upper stage' for pupils aged from fifteen to eighteen years, so there is no formal careers programme. There are well established links with several secondary schools and these help pupils and parents in the transition. The oldest pupils have good opportunities for discussion with the class teacher on their strengths and aptitudes. On a few occasions individual pupils have had some opportunity to have first hand experience of work experience within the community.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good and a number of lessons demonstrated notable strengths. As a result of the effective teaching pupils acquire new knowledge and develop their understanding. They make progress in relation to their ages and abilities. Most lessons are conducted in a calm atmosphere which is supported by positive relationships between teachers and their pupils and between pupils. Emphasis is placed on positive encouragement and in engaging the pupils with their work. Pupils say that they appreciate the quality of their learning environment and the support they receive from their teachers. Careful guidance and individual support develops pupil's confidence in their ability to learn. Class teachers remain with the pupils as they move through the school. This enhances continuity and the class teachers' good knowledge of their pupils.

Teachers generally plan and organise lessons well. The overall quality of lesson organisation and management supports the pace of learning and contributes to the pupils' good behaviour. In those lessons where pupils' concentration waned, teachers employed effective strategies to re-engage them in the learning. In most lessons, careful planning meets the learning needs of the pupils based on the teacher's knowledge of them and on information from records of their previous attainments. In a mathematics lesson, carefully structured activities enabled the teacher to provide structured individual support to all pupils, including those identified as the most able, through the provision of extension work.

About a quarter of the lessons seen during the inspection were of outstanding quality. These lessons had a lively pace with a range of teaching strategies. They used resources and questioning effectively. In such lessons, teachers showed excellent subject knowledge, using this effectively when drawing out answers from less confident pupils as well as challenging the more able. In French, German and music lessons the teachers' enthusiasm quickly engaged the pupils' interest and pleasure in learning. Teachers' exposition was carefully balanced with the active involvement of the pupils, challenging them to think independently. Resources are well used in most lessons. In science they were well organised to support pupils' developing understanding of Faraday's experiments and electro-magnetism.

Procedures and practices for assessing pupils' progress have improved since the last inspection. A framework for assessment based on the aims of the school is used to assess pupils' progress. Whilst systems have been established to record pupils' achievement through set learning objectives, assessment and marking policies and guidance on their use have not yet been developed. Teachers use the school's documents for recording progress, but the methods employed for recording are inconsistent and variable in quality. Teachers know their pupils well and regularly discuss their work with them. This is supported by dialogue between the teachers, collegial working, regular reviews and use of expert advice to support diagnosis of learning difficulties and particular needs. Not all subject records provide sufficient information to track each pupil's progress effectively. Teachers mark appropriate pieces of pupils' work carefully and very regularly, but practices vary between classes and teachers. Written feedback in pupils' books is often too brief, although teachers also provide verbal comments on pupils' work during lessons.

Support for pupils identified as having particular learning needs is good, both in the classroom and through individual support. There is effective collaboration between class teachers and the teacher with responsibility for special learning support. Good use is made of therapists from outside the school who provide learning support through

eurythmy, art, and brain gym, as well as an educational psychologist and the school doctor. Pupils identified as having learning difficulties are provided with individual education plans to guide their support which include appropriate learning targets.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is a strength of the school. The experience of learning in a small and cohesive community helps to develop the pupils' good social skills. They get on well together and are polite and sociable. The carefully planned start to the day with the morning verse and song gives pupils an opportunity for calm reflection, for example, on the cycle of the seasons and wonder of the world. This is in keeping with the Steiner Waldorf principle of rhythm that threads through the life of the school. Pupils say they enjoy school and this can be clearly seen as they participate enthusiastically in lessons and confidently engage with the teachers and each other. They are encouraged to help each other and to undertake tasks that benefit the school as a whole and community, for example, preparing the harvest meal. Pupils have opportunities to show their initiative as they grow older. In class 7 and 8 pupils are given a small sum of money which, by their enterprise, they have to increase to raise funds for a school trip; this is encouraging good economic awareness.

Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and their good moral development is supported by good role models from amongst the staff, who are respectful of individuals. Pupils are given much encouragement by their teachers when they achieve well and are sensitively shown how to take responsibility for their own actions. This contributes to the pupils' positive self-esteem and confidence. The pupils grow into confident and courteous young people.

While awareness of public services and institutions in England today is not planned in discrete topics, aspects are considered in some Main Lessons. Good opportunities occur in the oldest class to consider the responsibilities of citizenship, for example, in discussions on democracy and voting.

The diversity of heritage amongst the staff helps pupils to appreciate other cultures. Lively modern language teaching engages pupils and gives them an appreciation of other cultures. British and world geography help pupils to have understanding of people from other nations. The oldest pupils study religions represented in Britain today, helping them to gain appreciation of other cultures. Overall, appreciation and respect for other cultures is satisfactory.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of school's provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Pupils are well cared for in practice. They speak confidently about the care that they receive regarding their personal and academic development. The school's anti-bullying policy is understood by children and staff and pupils are confident that any cases of bullying are dealt with swiftly. The positive relationships and good behaviour throughout the school reflect this confidence. Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through both their diet and the provision of plenty of exercise. Policies with respect to welfare, health

and safety are in place. The files relating to welfare, health and safety are not well maintained. Procedures for carrying out checks of new staff have not been reviewed to meet current requirements. Attendance registers are not all completed adequately and do not always clearly indicate up-dated reasons for absence. They are not checked centrally on a daily basis to determine why a pupil is absent. Risk assessments are completed with the support of a specialist health and safety consultancy firm. Given the complexities of the school site, staff are clear about their role in supervising play. Appropriate checks are completed for school visits. Local authorities, including the fire services, provide good support with regard to fire safety and matters relating to training for safeguarding children. The admissions register is correctly maintained. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most but not all of the requirements.

What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools' Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *review procedures for undertaking checks of staff (paragraph 3(2)(b)); and*
- *ensure that all attendance registers always indicate reasons for absence, and that the registers are checked centrally and reasons for absence recorded (paragraph 3(9)).*

The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets most of the requirements for registration; however references have not always been taken up for recent appointments and staff are not asked to confirm their medical fitness. There is no written recruitment procedure detailing the checks and processes to be followed. Appropriate police and Criminal Records Bureau checks are made on United Kingdom and foreign nationals and the school's single central record is up to date and kept electronically. Volunteer staff and people connected with the Botton Village community are appropriately checked. No supply teaching or support staff are employed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school complies with all but one of the requirements.

What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools' Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, make appropriate checks on their medical fitness (paragraph 4(2)(a)).*

The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school premises and accommodation are of good quality and provide a peaceful and tranquil setting which support the development of pupils' in keeping with the Steiner Waldorf philosophy and principles. The pupils say that they appreciate the quality of their learning environment. The outside spaces that surround the school provide rich opportunities for pupils' physical development and play, the development of inquisitiveness, a sense of adventure and love of nature. The school makes good use of the environment as a learning resource.

The wooden-clad buildings that house the school provide a good quality of accommodation and have exteriors which blend harmoniously with their surroundings. Classrooms are spacious and are used effectively in relation to the ages of the pupils in each class. All areas of the school are well maintained and kept clean. Furnishings in classrooms are well suited to the ages of the pupils using them. Learning opportunities are extended by specialist rooms for woodwork, located a little way from the school and linked to community workshops, a school gym and an outdoor hard surfaced games area. Although there is no library, books are in plentiful supply and made accessible to serve the learning needs of each topic and class. Facilities provided for art and science are adequate to meet the needs of the Steiner curriculum.

The school has given good attention to the regulatory requirements with respect to buildings and accommodation. Facilities for pupils who are ill, highlighted as a weakness at the time of the school's last inspection, are now provided. Washrooms for staff and pupils are adequate in number, including for the kindergarten children who are now accommodated in the main school building. The school ensures that all appropriate safety checks are undertaken, including in relation to fire. Risk assessments are conducted and reviewed regularly although they are not maintained in a manner that makes it clear that they are regularly reviewed and up-dated on a regular basis. Access and provision for possible emergency evacuations are good.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The quality of information for parents

The information available for parents has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. The school now provides parents with all the required information on the school website as well as in the parents' handbook. This includes the regulatory policies and summary details of staff qualifications but does not include an exclusion policy.

A fortnightly newsletter details important current issues as well as seasonal information relating to festivals such as Michaelmas and Christmas.

Parents receive annual reports, and general curricular information is discussed at the termly parents' evenings. These also give the opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss their child's progress. The parents' pre-inspection questionnaires showed that there is significant support and appreciation for the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all the requirements except one.

What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools' Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *devise a written policy on exclusions (paragraph 6(3)(a)).*

The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

Since the previous inspection the school has revised its concerns and complaints procedure. This is now satisfactory and includes appropriate timelines for action and a panel for hearing complaints with one member being independent of the running of the school. There has been one complaint in the last year. The school reports that this was resolved before getting to the final stage.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART C: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

This section is not a requirement of the Education Act 2002. The business organisation and management of the school were inspected by the Lay Inspector, who has written this section of the report.

The quality of the organisation and management of the school

The school has a trustee body, the Eskdale Community Trust Council which delegates the management of the school to the College of Teachers. The College consists of seven teachers, including the school administrator.

The College of Teachers is composed of those teachers working at the school who have elected to take responsibility jointly for the management and development of the school. The College meets weekly to discuss pedagogy, to engage in study and to discuss policy and current business. The business and policy parts of the meeting are for the seven College members only, whereas all teaching staff take part in the educational parts of the meetings. Meetings are appropriately minuted. The College effectively has a permanent chair who is also the school administrator.

Some of the members of College take on particular roles such as special needs, safeguarding children and staff recruitment. The trustees receive regular reports from the College of Teachers. The chair of trustees, or his deputy, is always involved in the staff recruitment process.

Although discussion takes place about the future of the school, pupil numbers and other issues, there is no school development plan. Due to the size of the school and the close-knit team of teachers and trustees, communication between staff and trustees is very good.

The school clearly works within the ethos of Steiner Waldorf Education and the dedication and commitment of the staff and trustees is very evident.

The seven members of the College of Teachers, including the school administrator, concern themselves with management issues and as such act as a school management team. However there is no clear management structure other than that school documents state that the teachers run the school. Individuals or small groups take on responsibility for certain tasks often on an ad-hoc basis and without a documented brief.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

The following would promote clarity and accountability:

- a school development plan would help focus the whole community's vision and motivation for the school to flourish with increased pupil numbers together with a clear and transparent management structure delineating terms of reference and accountability for individuals;
- specific job descriptions for all employees, volunteers and trustees of the school to ensure that all colleagues are clear about their roles together with a user-friendly staff handbook to provide an essential reference; and
- take regard of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Code of Practice to guarantee that all areas of organisation and management are addressed.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall effectiveness of the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage

The kindergarten class serves children aged between three and six years. During the present year the majority will become aged five or older. Overall, the kindergarten meets the children's needs effectively. The sensitive consideration of individual children's development and the provision of work well matched to their capabilities are strengths of the kindergarten. The provision has a good capacity to continue to improve, although closer consideration of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is required.

The leadership and management of the early years' provision is satisfactory overall. The teaching staff have a clear sense of direction and purpose, and this is particularly well informed by their deep knowledge of the Steiner Waldorf approach. They deploy resources effectively and promote equality and diversity well. At the start of the present term the class moved onto the main school site from a building on the other side of Botton village. This has usefully integrated the kindergarten even more closely with the older classes; however risk assessments resulting from the move have yet to be fully completed. The class works extremely effectively with parents and their close mutual support is a major strength of the provision. Other partnerships, including with the local authority, are satisfactory, as is the self evaluation in the EYFS. During 2008-9 the school applied for exemption from several of the requirements of the EYFS, including from the assessment arrangements. As a result it did not complete the EYFS Profile during that year, instead continuing to complete its existing assessments. At the time of the inspection, no decision had been received on the exemption application.

The quality of provision in the EYFS is good. The children are able to work both with adults and other pupils, as well as independently. They show good levels of concentration, such as when grinding millet seeds for their baking, and when engaged in creative and dramatic play. They respect one another's views and also the environment. Good use is made of the natural resources, including the outdoor environment. The children are able to choose materials as well as being encouraged to clear away when they have finished using them. The provision is particularly effective in supporting social development, as when one pupil knew the story of Rumpelstiltskin, but was able to contain his enthusiasm and so not reveal the end of the story to the others.

The outcomes for children in the EYFS are good. They enjoy their learning and show good levels of achievement within the context of the Steiner Waldorf approach. They feel safe and are confident, having settled very well into their new classroom and the main school site. Through snacks and activities such as baking, they are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. The strength of their social development enables them to make positive contributions to the life of the kindergarten as well as providing them with skills which support their future learning and development.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

No

What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?

- *Make arrangements to complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the associated assessment requirements for all children within the final year of the EYFS, pending the outcome of the application for exemption;*

- *complete the risk assessments following the move of the kindergarten to the present facilities; and*
- *provide parents with details for contacting Ofsted and/or SIS should they wish.*

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Steiner Fellowship, and it is posted on the SIS website: (www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk).