

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship

INSPECTION REPORT

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

Name of school:	Greenwich Steiner
DCSF number:	203/6299
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Eileen McAndrew Supporting Inspectors: Sara Wiggins Ted Cohn Brian Fitzgerald Lay Inspector: Helen Weatherhead
Dates of inspection:	18-20 May 2010

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: Greenwich Steiner School

Address of the school: Woodlands
90 Mycenae Road
Greenwich
London
SE3 7SE

Telephone number: 020 8858 4404

Email address: admin@greenwichsteinerschool.org.uk

Proprietor: Greenwich Steiner School Initiative

Name of the Chair of the College of Teachers: N/A

Name of the Chair of the Trustees: Philip Clemo

Business Manager: Fran Russell

Education manager: Pene Johnstone

DCSF number: 203/6299

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

Age range of pupils and students: 3-13

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll: (Full time) Boys: 27 Girls: 30
(Part time) Boys: 9 Girls: 9

Number of children under 5: Boys: 11 Girls: 28

Number of pupils with statements of special educational need: None

Annual fees: £4,500-£5,880

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

Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector: Eileen McAndrew
Supporting Inspectors: Sara Wiggins
Brian Fitzgerald
Ted Cohn
Lay Inspector: Helen Weatherhead

Dates of inspection: 18-20 May 2010

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. Her 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:

Greenwich Steiner School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between three and twelve years of age. It is situated in a residential area in the London Borough of Greenwich. The school's educational practice is inspired and guided by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner as expressed in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. It was established in 1999 in different premises. There are four Kindergarten classes, two on the main site and two on the original site at St Georges Church, nearby. Admission is non-selective. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. At the time of the inspection there were 114 pupils on roll of whom 53 were in the Kindergarten. The school's aim is *'to foster the personal, emotional, aesthetic and intellectual development of pupils.'*

The school's last inspection took place in May 2007. In the following year, the school moved to its new premises and since then there has been nearly a complete change of staff, and the formation of a management team. Given these major changes particularly to staffing and management it is considered inappropriate to make direct comparisons with the findings of the previous report.

Summary of main findings:

Greenwich Steiner School is successfully established in its new premises and the staff have made a good beginning to the next stage of the school's development. The school achieves its aim, providing a good education which strongly reflects the distinctive Steiner philosophy. The satisfactory curriculum ensures an appropriate range of learning experiences for all pupils through the interpretation of the Steiner Waldorf themes. Teaching is predominantly good and occasionally outstanding. Pupils become effective learners, and as a result, make satisfactory and often good progress. Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is consistently fostered in all aspects of the school's work and is of good quality. The school ensures that all the required safeguarding policies are in place and implemented effectively. Pastoral care is a particular strength of the school and procedures for welfare, health and safety are consistently good. Curriculum planning is weak. The school has identified this and has begun a programme of curricular support and development which is already resulting in clear signs of improvement. Pupils enjoy coming to school and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and appreciative of the education their children receive.

What the school does well:

- it supports pupils' personal development very effectively by creating a safe and secure learning environment where pupils are very much valued and respected as individuals;
- it effectively fosters pupils' aesthetic development through imaginative, artistic and creative activities;
- it encourages teachers to use their expertise and deep knowledge of pupils to create an environment which is highly conducive to learning; and
- it has created a management structure which ensures effective and prompt decision making.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

The school meets all the requirements for registration.

Next Steps

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

- to improve the quality of curriculum planning and assessment to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress in their learning;
- to develop lesson planning to identify precisely what pupils of differing abilities are expected to know and understand by the end of each lesson; and
- to develop further the subject expertise of class teachers.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with some good features ensuring that pupils of all ages and abilities make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. The curriculum policy is clearly set out and supported by long- and short-term planning. The curriculum is based on the areas of learning outlined in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and includes literacy, numeracy, science, humanities, French, German and eurythmy. In addition, painting, drawing, craft and gardening form a central part of the provision. All pupils learn to sing and instrumental music extends and enhances the curriculum for a significant number of pupils. Religion is not currently included in the curriculum. Good use is made of resources available to support the curriculum.

The two-hour main lesson forms the core of the curriculum in all classes. The themes of these lessons are chosen from those set out for the appropriate age group in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. The themes, which currently include farming, geography, and history, are followed progressively for about four weeks. These lessons also include the effective study of English and mathematics together with aspects of the expressive arts which form an integral part of the learning. The main lesson has a regular rhythm that begins each day with a morning verse, followed by recorder music, song or movement, effectively reinforcing pupils' learning capability. The subject teaching of eurythmy, French, German, games, craft, gardening, music and singing add a substantial dimension to the curriculum. Although the curriculum provides practical and aesthetic learning, it does not currently include woodwork for Class 5 and 6.

The main lesson provides effectively for literacy and numeracy. In addition, the extra main lessons focus specifically on these basic skills and contribute strongly to pupils' good progress in these areas of learning. Alongside pupils' well-developed personal and social skills, these basic skills provide a secure foundation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

The planned curriculum for the main lesson and for each subject takes cognisance of the pupils' developmental stages as indicated by Rudolf Steiner. Subject planning is satisfactory and some is good. Curriculum planning is weak. It is variable in quality, often too general and does not set out clearly how pupils' progress in each of the areas of learning will be secured. The school has identified curricular planning as an area for immediate development and has already begun its programme of support and guidance. As a result, early work focusing on curriculum planning in one class shows clear signs of improvement. The provision ensures a broad range of learning experiences and teachers' knowledge of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and their pedagogical skills contribute strongly to pupils' satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. It benefits from systematic screening that clearly identifies pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy as well as indicating other areas of cognitive ability. This information is used effectively to inform planning for pupils with learning difficulties. However, it is used less effectively to ensure that pupils who are very able have appropriate

opportunities to extend their capabilities. Support for pupils whose behaviour causes some concern is assiduously addressed.

Good use is made of resources and of the school's well-designed, exceptionally high quality accommodation.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is predominantly good and occasionally outstanding, resulting in progress which is at least satisfactory, good in some areas and occasionally excellent. The class teachers have a thorough knowledge of the Steiner curriculum and a profound understanding of the values and principles which underpin a Steiner education. The extensive range of approaches within lessons ensures that pupils experience different ways of learning. In addition, they benefit from the familiar specific Steiner techniques which provide opportunities for rhythmic responses which enhance and reinforce their learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, encouraging pupils' confidence and helping them to develop a belief in their ability to achieve.

The planning for the core of the curriculum, the main lesson, is variable. It is often general, lacking precise details of how the Steiner themes are being interpreted and shaped to take account of the interests and capabilities of a particular year group. There is no common format or set of criteria to ensure a consistent and coherent approach to main lesson planning throughout the school. This means that while teaching builds effectively from one day to the next, teachers do not clarify precisely what they want pupils of each age group to know and understand in the medium- and longer-term. In addition, the lack of clearly identified learning objectives makes the accurate assessment of pupils' progress more difficult. It also means that the work proceeds at the pace set by what pupils cover in the lesson rather than at a pace planned by the teacher to ensure they achieve the best possible rate of progress.

The generally good teaching depends on the teachers' thorough knowledge and experience of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum though some aspects of their knowledge of humanities subjects are not always secure. Teachers display a consistently good level of professional skill and expertise, including effective class room approaches to manage the occasionally disruptive and difficult behaviour of a few pupils. These strong features ensure that pupils' progress is at least satisfactory but inconsistencies remain across subjects and year groups.

Literacy and numeracy are given an increasingly high priority, contributing to pupils' good achievement in these fundamental skills. The strong focus on speaking and listening helps pupils to become increasingly articulate and confident speakers. Writing, recitation, drawing and singing are taught well and some pupils' show considerable progress and achievement over time. Teachers have a close knowledge of individual pupils' strengths and needs and use this information particularly effectively in the support of pupils with learning difficulties. Although teachers identify pupils who are very able, work to challenge and extend their capabilities does not always reflect sustained planning.

Teachers enjoy their work and strive to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning. This enthusiasm is evident and results in pupils who like coming to school and when given the opportunity are able to work with high levels of motivation and interest. When

they have opportunities to work in groups or pairs they are able to support and learn from each other with increasing facility.

Assessment is satisfactory, with some good features. Teachers often provide oral feedback on pupils' work in lessons that helps them to understand what they have done well and how they can improve their work, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics. The marking of pupils' work is not as consistent. It is at its most helpful in the development of skills in English, but in humanities makes a more limited contribution to pupils' learning.

The diagnostic screening of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and of their cognitive development, provides helpful evidence to inform teachers about pupils' aptitudes and attainment. This is often effectively used to plan the progress of pupils with learning difficulties, but less so to plan the academic progress of the more able. The individual education plans intended to identify short-term targets to ensure progress frequently focus on personal and social development rather than progress in academic learning.

Teachers develop a deep knowledge of pupils' personal development and aptitudes, which is reflected in the notes they keep, and makes an important contribution to effective classroom management, the planning of individual lessons and the support of individual pupils' progress. This knowledge usefully informs reports to parents. These are well written in a lively and encouraging style that often includes insightful comments about pupils' attitudes and progress.

The extent to which assessment effectively influences future planning is variable. It is affected by some of the shortcomings in assessment practice and also by the failure of some planning to define clearly enough a framework for progress in learning. The school is aware of its shortcomings in planning, and has in train a number of strategies to improve assessment practice.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall with some outstanding features.

The spiritual development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' knowledge of themselves, and their self-confidence and self-esteem are very well developed, reflecting the philosophy and values of the school. The spiritual ethos of the school permeates the life of the school day. It begins with teachers gathering each morning to read from the *Calendar of the Soul*, recite a verse together, and bring to mind children in particular need. This creates a model of quiet and gentle reflection for the pupils' speaking of their morning verses in class and for subsequent lessons from the very youngest age.

The moral development of pupils is good. During the course of lessons, especially the main lesson, pupils' engagement and sense of being part of a community is encouraged through singing, rhythmic movement and recital of poetry. Stories of characters from myth and literature and accounts from history aid pupils' development as reflective thinkers and foster their awareness of others. They develop a strong sense of what is right and wrong supported by the atmosphere and

ethos of the school. They respect each other and listen carefully to each others' views in lessons, and are able to co-operate well in groups. Pupils' behaviour is generally good. They are mostly very well behaved in lessons and around the school, and are welcoming and polite to visitors. On a small number of occasions a few pupils were boisterous or potentially disruptive in their behaviour but responded well to teachers' guidance.

Pupils are ready to accept responsibility for their behaviour and they show initiative and contribute well to the life of the school. As they progress through school, they increasingly take responsibility for others and their environment. In the Kindergarten children are encouraged to take on responsibilities within the classroom, which they do with great willingness. Older pupils assist younger ones in walking to the swimming baths, pupils in Class 4 read stories to pupils in Class 1, and eco-responsibilities are developed through keeping the school litter-free and through recycling discarded materials.

Although the pupils develop appropriate general knowledge of public institutions and services in England through work in history, particularly in the older classes, this is an area that is, as yet, under-developed. The curriculum has no clearly planned approach to this area of general knowledge and in the younger age groups provision is not yet made to introduce pupils to 'people who help us' through services such as health, the police or fire-fighting.

Pupils have an appreciation of and respect for their own culture and the culture of other countries. They gain a wide range of European cultural experiences through poetry, music and mythology, and in history. Stories from the Old Testament also add a distinctive cultural dimension to main lessons in Class 3. Much of all pupils' work reflects an aesthetic dimension through work in the expressive arts. German, French and geography add important cultural dimensions that introduce pupils to different values and customs. The opportunity is taken to celebrate the Christian festivals such as Advent and Christmas, and the major festivals of Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. At the end of the school year a Multi-Cultural Fair is held across the whole school. The school is planning to extend this dimension through contacts with Steiner schools in India and Finland.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. It has clear and appropriate policies to safeguard pupils and promote their welfare. All staff have received regular training in safeguarding, including inter-agency training for their designated safeguarding persons. The school can also call upon the legal experience of the business manager in safeguarding matters. An interesting and effective feature of provision is the separate safeguarding interview which all candidates interviewed for posts in the school are required to undertake. This explores in some detail their attitudes to safeguarding and understanding of the matters involved. There are appropriate policies to safeguard pupils on educational visits. Staff identify risks relating to particular trips in their detailed planning, and records are kept of these arrangements.

Policies to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying are well designed and fit for purpose. They have been discussed and agreed with staff and contribute to effective

class management. Where bullying is reported, it is dealt with promptly and sensitively. Pupils report that they feel safe, secure and very well cared for in school. In discussions with inspectors, pupils said that they really enjoyed school.

The school meets all the health and safety requirements. It has updated the relevant policies where necessary, and provides staff training on their implementation from an expert consultant. Health and safety is a standing agenda item in meetings of Trustees, the senior management team and teachers. Fire risk assessments, recently carried out by an appropriate authority, identified no matters requiring urgent attention. The school is addressing issues raised in the report through a clear and detailed action plan.

The very careful attention paid to health and safety in the building that now houses most of the school is a particularly good feature of provision. The attention to detail from the design of the pegs for pupils to hang their coats and bags to the unusual and imaginative lighting for classrooms is impressive.

The school has clear and appropriate policies for first aid; more than sufficient staff have undertaken first aid training and several have training in paediatric first aid. Arrangements for pupils who may become ill are satisfactory.

A high priority is given to encouraging pupils to develop a healthy lifestyle. Pupils learn at an early age how to prepare nutritious snacks using fresh fruit, vegetables, pulses and grains. Pupils also know how to grow vegetables through practical activities and learn about the importance of sustainable farming methods, which includes a week's stay at a biodynamic farm. Underpinning the development of healthy lifestyles is the philosophical belief that children should learn how to live in harmony with nature.

The admission register and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the appropriate regulations.

The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff, volunteers and Trustees have been subject to satisfactory clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level. The school's rigorous employment procedures ensure that all required checks are carried out prior to appointment. The single central register meets requirements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is housed in a high quality accommodation in a grade II listed building. The house has been remodelled to exacting standards with remarkable imagination, sensitivity and care. The beliefs of Rudolf Steiner concerning the essential elements in the built environment most likely to encourage, foster and enhance pupils' personal, creative and academic development, were researched and regarded to

good effect. The result is a learning environment which combines beauty and function while retaining the integrity of this historical building. Space is used imaginatively to create inviting learning environments and interesting public areas where pupils' work is displayed and celebrated. The hall provides a flexible space for drama, eurythmy and music. The school's outdoor play space has attractive areas for recreation and well-used raised beds for gardening.

Two of the Kindergarten classes are housed in premises in a nearby church. The accommodation has been suitably adapted for this purpose and provides appropriate learning environments to support the education of the Early Years children and the youngest pupils of school age.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The quality of information for parents

The quality of information for parents is good. All the school policies and procedures are detailed and thorough. These are all readily available to parents in a file in the parents' room next to reception. All statutory policies are on the school website. A prospectus and parents' handbook are in process of being formulated. The weekly newsletter usefully informs parents of forthcoming school events. Parents learn about the curriculum, child development and children's progress at termly parents' evenings. Written reports are sent annually to parents. The best of these includes a short summary of what has been taught, a detailed account of the child's progress and achievements, and indications for the next steps in their learning.

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection parents' questionnaire were strongly supportive of the school. One stated that their child had said "*School is the nicest thing you can imagine*". When asked why, the reply was "*We learn so much!*"

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The school's complaints policy and procedures are fully compliant with the regulations. There have been four formal complaints within the last twelve months. One, just received, is in process. The other three were resolved without recourse to the panel 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

Greenwich Steiner School is a self-governing, independent organisation and registered charity. It was established ten years ago and in 2008, it moved to its current premises. This move has been part of a developmental process in many areas: a new building, new management structure and a significant number of new staff. The Board of Trustees, which meets monthly, has overall responsibility for legal and financial matters. The number of Trustees has increased to eleven and they bring a wide range of skills to their task. Five of them have teaching and educational administration expertise. Clear management structures are now in place. The focus of the well-defined school development plan (SDP) is on senior management, overall staffing and finance.

Currently the school is on a sound financial basis. The treasurer has produced financial plans which sit sympathetically with the aspirations of the school. A fourth Kindergarten has been established this year which will help to create future financially viable classes in the lower school. The new accountant has restructured the account keeping, making it more effective.

At present, the school has no College of Teachers but a senior management team has been formed. This comprises the business manager, the education manager and a Trustee. They are tasked with ensuring the carrying through of many aspects of the SDP. A significant dimension of the school's management structure has been the imaginative and successful appointment of a Business Manager. This has proved a highly effective initiative, ensuring that all administrative policies are effectively and efficiently implemented. A forward-looking and innovative practice in the school's recruitment procedure is the incorporation of a safeguarding panel interview as part of the process.

The education manager is a new appointment and she has the great advantage of being a practising teacher. Her direction to teachers through observing classes and mentoring is already producing improvement in teaching, planning and assessment. There is a growing confidence among staff. The post also provides a contact point for parents. A newly established monthly meeting for all Kindergarten, class and subject teachers creates a sense of whole-school cohesion. Another very good initiative is the holding of class focus meetings where all the teachers of a particular class meet to share observations and discuss the children. These are in addition to the regular weekly teachers' meetings and a weekly class teachers' curriculum meeting.

Teaching reflects the values of the school. The spiritual ethos permeates the lessons. It is evident in the children's response to others and in their relationship to learning. There is a buoyant, energetic mood in the community. It is very open to suggestions for improvement. The parent body is very supportive. One parent described the school as '*a beacon of professionalism.*'

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

Yes.

The Trustees might like to take into consideration the following suggestions as to where specific improvements could be made:

- developing strategies further to ensure that management structures become embedded in school life;
- improving further the coordination of the management of Kindergarten procedures; and
- prioritising the production of a staff and a parent handbook.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

The school has four Kindergarten classes, working with children aged between three and rising seven years. Two of these classes are in the main building and two in St George's church, a short walk away. The needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are effectively met and the provision has a good capacity to maintain continuous improvement. Throughout all Kindergarten classes there is a strong and highly effective emphasis on employing the rhythm of the day, week and year to ensure that the children feel safe and secure.

At the time of this inspection, the provider has applied for modifications and exemptions by the Secretary of State from parts of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. These parts were excluded from this inspection.

Leadership and management of the Kindergarten classes are good. Resources, consisting of a good range of natural materials and artefacts, are well deployed, successfully encouraging children to initiate their own activities. Equality and diversity are outstandingly well promoted; teaching is carefully planned to enable good opportunities for older children to support younger children, resulting in exceptional relationships across the age groups. Safeguarding and health and safety policies appropriately support the children's welfare. Risk assessments are carefully prepared, although they vary in style across each Kindergarten. The children are encouraged to select and extend their own activities within carefully managed environments, which although different across the two settings, are well established, and enable them to think critically and play imaginatively.

Kindergarten children from both settings enjoy joining together weekly in the large park area outside the main school grounds. This helps to prepare them for the next stage of their education. A collegial overview is developing and has resulted in improvement through the effective self-evaluation by the staff. However, no one person has an overview of the EYFS settings. Consequently procedures are not coordinated across the classes and best practice is not shared. For example, assessment data are not fully evidenced or used systematically to contribute to future improvements in learning across the Kindergartens.

The school has good relationships with Greenwich local authority. Partnerships with parents and carers are good and the Kindergartens' engagement with them is good. Parents commented extremely positively about the high regard which they have for *'such a welcoming, warm place for their children.'* Home visits and excellent communication by the Kindergarten staff support a shared value for the children's education.

The quality of the provision in the EYFS settings is good. Staff support the children's developing self-confidence, creativity and social skills extremely well both indoors and outside, encouraging their development. Child-initiated and adult-led activities are well balanced. The assessments made by staff are useful and provide a good basis for individual planning and comment on the children's progress during their time

in the Kindergarten and when they leave. As yet the school has not provided parents with a written summary reporting on each child's progress against the early learning goals and the assessment scales. The peaceful yet responsive support provided by adults strongly promotes the children's concentration and enables activities to continue for significantly long periods. Healthy lifestyles are outstandingly well promoted through the daily snacks, many of which children help to prepare, and through a wide range of outdoor play activities.

The outcomes for children are good and well suited to the values of a Steiner education. They achieve well and enjoy their learning. On his birthday a child received with joy a special birthday story, song, verse and card: the intense concentration of all children as they celebrated this special day reflected the self-esteem and confidence of all within a class group. They develop social skills and attitudes towards learning particularly effectively. Speaking and listening skills are very well developed. Children understand the importance of keeping themselves safe, for instance attaching a seat belt to a slide and requesting adult support to ensure that it was safe to use. Children are highly independent, for example they competently dress themselves for outdoor weather remembering to use coats or sunhats. They make particularly good contributions to the life of the class, through sweeping the floor, folding cloths and setting the table. They develop good skills for the future as they play creatively and imaginatively together and show fine motor dexterity through weaving and sewing activities.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

The school meets all but one of the statutory requirements.

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

- The school must provide parents with a written summary reporting on each child's progress against the early learning goals and the assessment scales.

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship. Further copies of the report are available from the school or from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionservice.co.uk