

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools associated with the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship

INSPECTION REPORT

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

Name of school:	Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley
DfE number:	919/6109
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mrs Eileen McAndrew Supporting Inspectors: Mrs Cecile Corfield Mr Mike Thirkell Lay Inspector: Miss Deborah Leah
Dates of inspection:	5-8 December 2011

CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

Part A: Introduction and summary

Part B: Compliance with regulations for registration

Part C: The quality of organisation and management

Part D: Early Years Foundation Stage

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: Kings Langley Steiner School

Address of school: Langley Hill
Kings Langley
Hertfordshire, WD4 9HG

Telephone number: 01923 262505

Fax number: 01923 270958

Email address: smithj@rsskl.org

Proprietor: Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley Ltd

Names of the Chair of the College of Teachers: Paul Murray and Anthony Arunlanandam

Name of the Chair of the Trustees: Ann Worrell

Name of Administrator: Carol Langley

DfE number: 919/6109

Type of school: Independent school associated with the Steiner Fellowship

Age range of pupils and students: 3-19

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll:	(Full time)	Boys: 189	Girls: 166
	(Part time)	Boys: 28	Girls: 36

Number of children under 5: Boys: 31 Girls: 32

Number of post-16 students: Boys: 62 Girls: 39

Number of pupils with statements of special educational need: Boys: 2 Girls: 2

Number of boarders: Boys: 7 Girls: 4

Annual fees: £3,990-£8,145

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

Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector: Mrs Eileen McAndrew

Supporting Inspectors: Mrs Cecile Corfield
Mr Mike Thirkell

Lay Inspector: Miss Deborah Leah

Dates of inspection: 5-8 December 2011

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 Schools Fellowship and agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). 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 Schools 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:

Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley is an independent school for girls and boys aged three to nineteen, situated on a large site in rural surroundings in Kings Langley in Hertfordshire. The school's educational practice is inspired and guided by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner as expressed in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. It was opened in 1949 and is one of the longest established Steiner Waldorf schools in the United Kingdom. There are currently 419 pupils on roll of whom eleven are boarders who are placed with local host families. Sixty-three children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage and one hundred and one students are in the sixth form. Classes 1 to 8 are in the lower school; Classes 9 to 13 constitute the upper school. As a consequence of the later introduction of formal aspects of learning in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, pupils undertake national examinations of GCSE and Advanced level (A2) a year later than usual. Admission is non-selective. Four pupils have statements of special educational needs. In its guiding aim the school echoes the words of Rudolf Steiner *"Our highest endeavour must be to develop human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives."*

The school was last inspected in May 2009.

Steiner class names	National Curriculum	
Kindergarten	Nursery, Year R, Year 1	
Class 1	Year 2	Lower school
Class 2	Year 3	Ditto
Class 3	Year 4	Ditto
Class 4	Year 5	Ditto
Class 5	Year 6	Ditto
Class 6	Year 7	Ditto
Class 7	Year 8	Ditto
Class 8	Year 9	Ditto
Class 9	Year 10	Upper school
Class 10	Year 11	Ditto
Class 11	Year 12	Ditto
Class 12	Year 13	Ditto
Class 13	(not in NC)	Ditto

Summary of main findings:

Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley succeeds in providing a good quality of education within which the principles of the Steiner philosophy remain of paramount importance and influence. The school achieves its stated aim with pupils developing as mature, self-confident young people well-prepared for the next stage of their lives. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is outstanding and their moral and social development is good. The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. Curriculum planning has some weakness, as does assessment. Teaching is good overall and a significant proportion is outstanding. As a result of the effective curriculum and good teaching, pupils of all abilities become effective learners, who make good progress and achieve well. Pupils' behaviour is good and contributes significantly to their learning. Good procedures and practice support the safeguarding of pupils who feel well cared for and safe in school. Pupils of all ages said in discussion that they really loved coming to school, and parents are wholeheartedly supportive of the school and the education it provides for their children.

The school meets all of the regulations. The school has made progress in teaching, in welfare, health and safety, and in the Kindergarten since the last inspection.

What the school does well:

- the Kindergarten provides a well-thought out and secure foundation for pupils' personal and academic learning;
- it creates a distinctive Steiner ethos within which pupils' personal development is assiduously and successfully fostered;
- its teachers succeed in motivating pupils who become increasingly active learners who love school and take satisfaction from their achievement; and
- it encourages maturity and equips pupils and students with good habits of working, a sense of self-worth and a respect and appreciation for others.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

The school meets all regulatory requirements.

What the school must do to comply with the Equality Act 2010:

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Next Steps

Although not a requirement, the school might like to consider the following points for development in order to improve its provision further:

- develop medium-term planning to form schemes of work which identify learning objectives to make clear what pupils of a given age will be expected to know, understand and be able to do;
- consider how teaching strategies can be extended to take greater account of the different levels of ability in each class;

- agree a framework for assessment such that pupils' progress across the curriculum can be assessed in relation to identified learning objectives; and
- map the provision for PSHE across the curriculum, in relation to the stages of pupils' development and continue work to work to implement fully careers guidance.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with a number of strong features. It is based effectively on the Steiner Waldorf curriculum which emphasises that learning should match the age and stage of development of the child and that rhythm is 'a vital element of learning'. It includes a wide range of interesting learning opportunities which meets the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities, including those identified as having special learning needs. The provision is enhanced by a number of enrichment and extra-curricular activities which contribute significantly to pupils' learning experiences, preparing them well for the opportunities of adult life.

The curriculum follows the Steiner Waldorf main lesson themes, forming a scheme of work for each class interpreted by each teacher to match the interests and needs of the pupils in the group. This fundamental medium-term planning is of variable quality and lacks some of the features of effective schemes of work. The aims are usually clearly expressed but the learning objectives do not set out precisely what is to be learned. Similarly, details of how provision will be differentiated to meet the differing needs of pupils are not always specified. This makes it difficult for teachers to ensure that what is planned will ensure appropriate rates and levels of progress in each area of learning within a theme across a given time.

Main lessons, referred to as 'the morning lesson', throughout the school are the key component of the curriculum and are normally of two hours duration. These main lessons effectively integrate different areas of learning and help to ensure continuity of learning in key aspects such as literacy and numeracy. The recurring rhythm of main lesson learning is reiterated effectively as pupils move through the school through recitation, singing, discussions, number and recall. Activities and tasks within main lessons contribute effectively to the development of pupils' confidence and encourage them to take responsibility and to think imaginatively. For example, in Class 3, individuals tell stories they have composed to the whole class. The integration of learning themes and the links made to other relevant areas of learning are valuable features of main lessons and significant aspects of learning at all levels throughout the school. The school succeeds in maintaining a balance between academic, practical and creative learning. The curriculum provides a wide range of very good learning opportunities in the visual arts and in creative work, including painting, pottery, woodwork, metalwork, textiles and photography. These are much enjoyed by pupils and supported by good facilities and resources. Eurythmy, '*a dance like art form*' is taught throughout the school supporting the development of co-ordination and balance whilst enabling pupils to explore rhythms in music and speech.

Literacy and numeracy are effectively developed throughout the school and show key strengths particularly in speaking and listening. An enriching element of the lower school curriculum is early access to French and German. Teaching places a strong emphasis on listening and speaking, resulting in pupils enjoying their learning, making rapid progress and achieving very well. Similarly In the lower school, the extensive school grounds provide excellent opportunities for a range of outdoor activities, including gardening.

Pupils benefit from very good provision for music and singing throughout the school. A large proportion of pupils in the school learn to play a musical instrument, most notably in the lower school classes. Following the usual Steiner practice, information and communication technology (ICT) is introduced in Class 9 and is used to enhance the curriculum where it is seen to be relevant to students' learning and development. The school now uses the International Grades in Open Technologies (INGOT) curriculum to support learning in ICT. This enables pupils to study ICT at a level appropriate to their needs and they can now choose to take ICT as a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) course. As a consequence of the later introduction of formal aspects of learning in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, pupils undertake national examinations of GCSE and Advanced level (A2) a year later than usual. At both levels pupils have access to a suitable range of subjects, including academic, creative and practical subjects. Pupils take a minimum of five subjects at GCSE and most take seven or eight. From 2009 to 2011 pupils consistently achieved well above the national average with over 80% of the cohorts attaining A*-C grades in five or more subjects. In Class 12, students undertake 3, 4 or 5 Advanced Supplementary (AS) level subjects depending on their ability, leading to a corresponding number of A2 level examinations in Class 13. This 'transition year' uses a seminar approach where appropriate, ably supporting transition to higher education.

The school has a useful statement relating to the provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE) which sets out a number of learning experiences for pupils in different classes. In addition, the range of experiences contained within the Steiner Waldorf curriculum ensures that pupils have a range of experiences and guidance related to their personal development. The programme is enhanced by additional support for drug and sex health education by specialists, a local police officer and other external speakers. Nonetheless, the school has not yet taken the opportunity of mapping a range of PSHE provision to ensure there is a progressive programme throughout the school. Careers education has been introduced in Class 9 since the last inspection. This development is supported by the school's *'Recommendations to improve the delivery of careers guidance in the upper school'* which has still to be fully implemented. Useful links have been made with the Connexions service and all pupils in Class 10 have a work experience arranged through the local authority. Older students receive helpful personal support in progressing to university.

Provision for pupils who are identified with special learning needs is good and as a result targeted pupils make good progress. Clear strategies have been established to improve the range of support available and make the most effective use of resources. Appropriate individual education plans are written for pupils with statements of special educational needs and for those receiving learning support. Information from regular screening tests and individual tests conducted by the learning support department is shared with class and subject teachers so that appropriate learning strategies can be used more widely. Planning between specialist staff and class and subject teachers currently relies too much on informal meetings. The requirements of pupils' statements of special educational needs are met within the curriculum with additional support provided as necessary, and the statements are reviewed annually.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good overall. In the upper school, half of the lessons observed were outstanding and almost all were at least good, and in the lower school just over half were good and the remainder satisfactory. As a result, pupils make good progress over time and achieve well. This represents an improvement in teaching since the last inspection.

The teachers in both lower and upper schools have a good knowledge of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum helping them to interpret the familiar themes in ways which will capture the interest and attention of pupils in their class. In the upper school, the majority of teachers are subject specialists with a thorough knowledge of their subject allied to strong teaching skills and classroom strategies which contribute significantly to the overall quality of teaching. Subject teachers are well acquainted with the requirements of the examinations and ensure that pupils become increasingly aware of how to improve their work in relation to what they will need to know and be able to do to achieve well. Arrangements for setting in English and mathematics from Class 9 take close account of the ability and learning needs of pupils, contributing strongly to pupils' good progress.

Main lessons and individual subject provision are adequately planned in the upper and lower schools and for this level of planning a common format is generally used, helping to ensure some consistency across the school. Planning almost always identifies the broad aims of the main lesson block or the subject lessons but the objectives are too often very general and lack any specific detail in relation to what precisely pupils of a given age or ability are expected to know, understand or be able to do at the end of the lesson or lesson block. This in turn makes it difficult to assess accurately the progress individuals or groups have made. Individual lesson planning is too variable with quality from good to barely adequate. Where medium-term planning is more effective, as for example in Class 2 in the lower school, the teacher identifies the expected learning outcomes at the end of a particular main lesson block, so progress can be assessed against those stated learning intentions.

In the best lessons teachers build effectively on previous learning, encouraging pupils to be confident in tackling new learning and in applying the skills they have learned. Teachers are adept at knowing where to make productive links to other areas of learning and when to narrow the focus to secure specific understanding. Good quality questions maintain pupils' engagement and concentration contributing to pupils' good and sometimes outstanding progress. As a consequence, pupils become increasingly effective learners who accept responsibility and apply themselves very well to the tasks they are given and make good progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are almost always good contributing to a supportive and positive atmosphere where pupils grow in confidence and believe in their own ability to succeed.

Very effective learning support procedures identify pupils who have learning difficulties in both the lower and upper schools and a range of in-class, small group or individual support contributes to pupils' good progress. Teaching support seen in class was precisely focused and skilled, contributing significantly to pupils' learning and self-confidence.

The number of pupils identified as particularly able or talented is far fewer than the nationally recommended ten percent of the pupil population. Occasionally in some

lessons, more able pupils have an additional or more challenging task to tackle, but this is not often the case.

The strong emphasis on oracy and literacy, contributes significantly to pupils' good progress in these areas, most notably in speaking and listening. Pupils become increasingly articulate speakers, able to express a view, ask questions, or address some uncertainty in their understanding. In a lesson on the development of the Roman arch, pupils in Class 9 were able to enquire about and discuss aspects of the structure, including its design, construction materials and load-bearing characteristics using a specialist vocabulary. They made rapid progress in their individual knowledge and understanding through this discussion, and contributed to each other's understanding. Progress in writing lags more than usually behind progress in the other strands of literacy and this has been recognised by the school as an area for improvement. As a result, the Learning Support department has initiated a promising project to develop a literacy programme which would guide teachers in the systematic and progressive development of literacy within the ethos and spirit of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum.

A high value is given to the teaching of the creative and expressive arts which are of fundamental importance in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum for all pupils. The quality of teaching in art, music and work with resistant materials is a strength of the school. In consequence, pupils respond with the same interest, effort and motivation that they put into other subjects, widening their experience and developing their ability to learn in different ways.

Assessment is satisfactory, with strengths in relation to teachers' knowledge of individual pupils' personal attributes and characteristics. The identification of specific aspects of an individual pupil's academic progress is a weakness in current assessment practice. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Teachers are expected to mark all of pupils' work but in common with some other Steiner Waldorf schools, most do not write grades or marks on pupils' work. In some cases, a single word or short phrase is written or work is ticked. Teachers do give pupils feedback in lessons which helps them to understand what they have done well or what they need to do next. In the best examples of constructive marking, as for example in English in the Upper school, comments on the pupils' work explain precisely which features of the work are good and exactly what the pupil needs to do next to improve.

The school has no written policy to unify the practice of assessment so teachers assess and record in the way each prefers. All class teachers carry out tests and reviews for main lesson work and for aspects of literacy and numeracy but these are not set within a framework of what progress the class is expected to achieve across a given time. Recent work initiated by the learning support department and class teachers in the lower school is contributing to the more accurate assessment of pupils' progress in some aspects of literacy. Similarly there are regular opportunities for discussions on individual pupils and their needs and for child studies and observations which give teachers valuable insights into pupils' strengths and needs. This information is not yet consistently used to adapt and differentiate classroom provision, although the need for differentiation is set down in some planning. The extent to which assessment effectively influences future planning is variable due partly to weaknesses in assessment practice and also because much of the planning is too general to track pupils' progress against specific learning objectives.

The diagnostic assessments integral to the work of the Learning Support department are good. These assessments are carried out by staff when concerns are expressed about a pupil's progress or if necessary when a pupil joins the school later than Class 1. In addition, regular class screening tests are undertaken in Classes 2, 4, 6 and 8, to assess needs across the class. This provides valuable opportunities for the department to work with the class teacher on strategies appropriate to meet the needs of individuals or groups within the class. This process contributes effectively to the range of pedagogical skills within the staff community and provides a good model for wider dissemination.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 2 - The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The pupils' spiritual and cultural development is outstanding and their moral and social development is good. The Steiner Waldorf curriculum has a Christian basis and also enables the pupils to develop awareness of other cultures and religions. As the pupils progress through the school, the ethos and culture of the school promotes their self-confidence and self-knowledge. This enables them to feel part of wider society and to have a sense of their own individuality. Spiritual development is effectively promoted through the rhythms of each day. The lesson begins with a verse and the pupils reflect on the bounty of the natural world, and their own spirit and being. They make use of a calendar of verses which reflects the changes in the seasons and the changes within the pupils themselves as they grow older. The curriculum for religion is planned so as to contribute appropriately to the evolving consciousness of the child. The school has pupils from several world faiths and these pupils are encouraged to talk about their festivals so that all pupils may celebrate them together. These include Hanukah, Eid, Diwali, and Sukkoth extending pupils' knowledge and understanding and promoting tolerance and harmony. Pupils in Class 5 visited a Hari Krishna temple during their study of Indian myths, increasing their understanding through a vivid first-hand experience.

Moral and social development is consistently promoted through the Steiner Waldorf curriculum with its emphasis on acquiring principles and values and developing respect for others. Educational stories provide examples of the consequences of particular conduct and these serve to reinforce the pupils' understanding of right and wrong behaviour. Behaviour is generally good, but there are pockets of disruptive behaviour, especially in the lower school. Overall, teachers manage their classes effectively and lessons run smoothly. The school has well-understood strategies for dealing with more serious misdemeanours. All are documented appropriately and parents are involved and kept informed. The pupils state that they love coming to school, attendance is good and there is a strong sense of belonging to an important community.

The pupils take part in fund-raising events for local charities and for the school and are aware of others less fortunate than themselves. They raise funds for a new Steiner school in Israel which takes both Jewish and Arab children. Their community service involves working in local playgroups and in centres for adults with learning difficulties. The Student council involves the oldest pupils and gives opportunities for debate and discussion as well as giving those students a voice in the life of the school. The younger pupils state that they too would like to have a School Council and the school might usefully investigate this request.

The pupils have a good understanding of public institutions in Britain. In the lower school, they learn about the birth of democracy and in the upper school, the pupils learn in greater detail about matters such as the structure of society, the constitution of the United States of America and the purpose and function of the United Nations Organisation. Regular visits out of school extend pupils' understanding of public institutions as do visitors to the school, such as the four members of parliament who came to talk to the pupils and parents. A visit to the Houses of Parliament and one to a district judge to hear a trial gave pupils exciting first-hand learning experience of democracy and the law in action.

The pupils are prepared well for their future economic well-being understanding, for example, that they have to save for their foreign exchange visits. Appropriate emphasis is put on ensuring that all pupils are literate and numerate and from Class 9 develop competence in the use of ICT. These skills allied to their personal and social skills help to ensure that by the end of full-time education pupils have been prepared well either to continue with their education or enter the world of work.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of welfare, health and safety is good and pupils, including boarders, say that they feel safe in school and well cared for. The school has made evident progress with relation to welfare, health and safety since the last inspection. Comprehensive policies support all required aspects of welfare, health and safety and these are effectively implemented and regularly reviewed. The policies for child protection and first aid are supported by a written First Aid policy and staff with appropriate and up-to-date qualifications. The anti-bullying policy is well understood by pupils who said there was little bullying but they were confident that if and when it occurred, older students or staff would deal with it effectively. The policy relating to educational visits is currently under further review.

Risk assessments for all parts of the school have been thoroughly undertaken and this represents a key and important improvement since the last inspection. A specialist company provides health and safety checks and the maintenance in the school workshops. Fire safety and protection is well considered. The annual fire-risk assessment, records of regular checks on fire-fighting equipment and fire drills are appropriately maintained. Arrangements for the effective supervision of pupils are thorough.

The school carries out its duty with respect to disability access and all aspects of the Equality Act 2010. Attendance and admissions registers are suitably maintained and supported by electronic recording.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 4 – The suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has very effective procedures to ensure that all required checks are carried on staff, trustees and volunteers, including those for the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). The Single Central Record (SCR) meets requirements fully.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 – The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The large ten-acre site, with a range of domestic and purpose built premises, provides good accommodation with specific strengths for specialist subject areas. Well planned recreation areas give pupils and students good quality space to play and socialise. Accommodation in the main classroom building is used well to provide good-sized rooms and specialist laboratories. The number of pupils in some classes is approaching a maximum, an issue that needs to be considered in relation to further admissions. The administrative block and its adjoining house have been adequately remodelled providing offices, a good quality specialist ICT suite, learning support rooms and a room for handwork. The theatre and gymnasium support pupils' performance in the expressive arts and sport well with specialist accommodation of a high quality. Workshop space has been very effectively created in a single storey block, ably supporting work in resistant materials.

The accommodation for the four Kindergarten classes is characterised by the well-adapted, inviting environment created by staff to support the learning experiences provided for the youngest children. The three very attractive gardens include a range of fruit trees, a pond for pond-dipping and a sand pit. Outdoor play takes full advantage of this provision.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a good range of information to parents and carers. An attractive recently produced prospectus sets out clearly the ethos and aims of the school and its educational purpose. Many expressive photographs of pupils convey a sense of the lively variety of curricular experiences for all classes. Key policies are easily accessible on the school's website, with hard copies available from the school reception.

A weekly newsletter helps to keep the school community informed about day-to-day happenings and forthcoming events. Three times a year a full-colour magazine, *Term Recorder*, is sent to all parents. It has news of staff and past pupils, current events, and biographical portraits of personalities who have played an important part in the growth of the school. It also celebrates many examples of beautifully reproduced recent work by pupils across the school.

Regular talks for parents are organised to give insights into the background and philosophy which form the foundations of Steiner Waldorf education. Class teachers and upper school sponsors arrange parents' evenings each term. Annual written reports are compiled for each pupil but the quality is variable. In a minority of classes or subjects teachers give precise information on the pupil's strengths and areas for development but in many cases the report is limited to a broad generalised comment or to observations on the pupil's attitudes and preferences. Such comments give parents and the pupils limited information on attainment and next steps for improvement. Those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed strong support for the school and the education provided

for their children. A number of these parents mentioned that they would welcome more information on their child's progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 7 - The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

The school complies fully with the regulations. The two named complaints officers, deal promptly with concerns. One formal complaint has been registered in the last year and was dealt with effectively, following the school's procedures.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART C: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT (SCHOOL ETHOS AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES)

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 Rudolf Steiner School of Kings Langley (RSSKL) is a registered charity with a Council of Trustees. This comprises three members each from teachers and parents with three other members, as established in the Articles of Association. Their task is to ensure that the school *'provides a Steiner Waldorf education of the highest quality commensurate with available resources, while also being responsible for the financial and legal welfare of the school'*. The strong representation of teachers among trustees allows direct input of educational viewpoints into council deliberation. The way in which trustees are elected is not entirely clear to some members of staff or to trustees themselves and needs further clarification. The whole school has been made familiar with the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Code of Practice, and aspires to its designated standard of good practice.

The school is well-managed and now financially secure. The chair of trustees spends at least a day each week in school, considering proposals and helping with the writing up of documents. The association of parents, teachers and friends (PTFA) is strong and active in fund-raising. They have enabled capital projects such as the theatre refurbishment to be undertaken for the benefit of the school.

Teachers have been relieved of administrative tasks and time-consuming decision making thanks to the expertise of key support staff and the introduction of an effective mandate system.

The finance, legal, organisation and work (FLOW) group carries day-to-day and week-to-week management responsibility and meets for several hours each week to support the bursar. It consists of the chair of trustees, the education facilitator and his assistant, the bursar, and teachers representing Kindergarten, lower and upper schools.

The college of teachers is in the process of reviewing its role, and this should be done as expeditiously as possible. The college carries responsibility for the ethos of the school, while delegating to mandate holders specified responsibilities that include consultations and making decisions. The college receives regular verbal and written reports from mandate holders, and listens to concerns from members of the wider school community. It maintains a good overview of the school. Clear minutes record actions with names, and these are followed up in the next meeting.

The college of RSSKL maintains good links with the UK Council of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, of which the school representative is a member. The representative has a weekly opportunity to report to the college from Fellowship council meetings, and to consult on matters in the wider UK Steiner Waldorf movement. The College of Teachers has good systems of staff support and monitoring. Peer mentoring involves helpful visits to each others' lessons. The main lesson timetable has been adjusted to enable this to happen for one teacher each week. Observations of classroom practice provide valuable information for curriculum research. Steiner Waldorf advisers are used regularly by RSSKL to

support new teachers, and their input is valued. Regular appraisals of class teachers of Classes 1, 4 and 7 are carried out by experienced colleagues who are usually from outside the school, aiding their objectivity.

Leadership is shared among the mandate holders who have taken on responsibility for specific areas and needs in the school. This works very well for example, in relation to the complaints mandate, where the stages of listening, reporting and taking further action are clearly understood and implemented by those involved. Communication is excellent, while protecting confidentiality. The mandate system benefits from the clear documentation of tasks. This allows those responsible to get things done, either singly or with help, according to individual wishes. The mandate co-ordinator checks and records carefully the setting up of each mandate, and ensures review procedures are followed. This supports individual mandate holders well and contributes to the system's effective working.

A strong team of highly dedicated and professional administrative staff supports the school's educational provision to very good effect. A key post is that of education facilitator, who is accountable to the college of teachers and to the trustees. This pivotal role protects the school, supports the teachers, and has helped college meetings become more focused and more streamlined. It involves consistent attention to analysing, co-ordinating, and ensuring that agreed appropriate actions and responses are carried out. Sensitive matters, for example in staffing, are part of the responsibility of the facilitator and are dealt with appropriately and skilfully.

Colleagues and parents expressed satisfaction with the progress made on how the school is run.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

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

- strengthen the role of the college of teachers by taking a lead in curriculum development, and addressing the educational needs of the whole range of pupils, including those of who are more able;
- review the work of trustees with a view to having more named trustees with individual responsibilities;
- clarify for the whole school community the procedure for becoming a trustee and explore the possibilities as well as the constraints of the school's legal framework, so that elections for trustees are transparent and understood by all members of the Association.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall effectiveness of the four Kindergarten classes is good with some outstanding features. The children make good progress in their personal development and their understanding of the natural world. The staff work well together for the benefit of the children. Good relationships are very evident and the ethos of the Kindergarten provides a warm, stable environment in which the children flourish. Teachers ensure that all children are treated with kindness and fairness in all that they do, within an atmosphere of mutual respect. The children's behaviour is good. Any child who behaves in an unacceptable way is managed sensitively and effectively.

The Steiner Waldorf curriculum for this age group is firmly embedded in all that the staff provide. Planning is excellent and details clearly the provision for the children each day. Yearly, termly, weekly and daily planning is of high quality. The school has applied for exemption from communication, language and literacy and from problem solving, reasoning and number. The information technology requirement in knowledge and understanding of the world has also been requested for exemption. The Early Learning Goals recommended for children nationally are not compatible with the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. The school was granted exemption in 2008 and has had to reapply as the exemption has expired.

Teaching is good with some outstanding features. Teachers and assistants are good role models for Steiner Waldorf education. The calm, empathic manner in which adults communicate with the children enables them to develop self-confidence and self-awareness. A good range of practical activities is provided and the children use their imagination when playing with the range of creative resources in each room. The children are encouraged to exercise freedom of choice and they learn to this with increasing confidence. Some resources are stored centrally and this area is well organised so that teachers can find what they need quickly.

Teachers expect children to help at snack time or to tidy up, which they do with pleasure. The mixed-age groups promote the family atmosphere and it is delightful to see the older children serving at snack time and helping the youngest children with their chosen activities. Interesting conversations take place in the Main Lesson and at other times. By the end of their time in Kindergarten, most children are articulate and well prepared for the next stage of their education. They make good progress in their personal and social skills.

Leadership and management in the kindergarten are good and this ensures that the outcomes for children are good. Teachers fully understand that there is collective responsibility for organisation of the Kindergartens. They attend regular Tuesday meetings so all are kept well-informed. An experienced teacher mentors students who provide valuable assistance in the daily life of the Kindergarten. The welfare, health and safety of the children are of paramount importance. The school has appropriate policies, strategies and procedures in place, including risk assessments. All required details and information on children who receive government funding is sent to the local authority.

The school has applied for exemption from the Early Years' assessment procedures. And the staff follow the Steiner Waldorf approach to assessment. They carry out regular screenings and evaluations of the children's progress and these are carefully recorded. If a child is identified as needing extra support, a detailed 'Child Profile' is undertaken and parents are kept fully informed. Should a parent express a concern,

the staff have meetings to try to address the matter. Careful details are kept of meetings and procedures undertaken. Informative and attractive reports are sent to parents each year. The Kindergartens have an open-door policy which enables parents to speak to staff each day contributing to good relationships.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

Yes.

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