

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:	North London Rudolf Steiner School
DfE number:	309/6067
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley Supporting Inspector: Mr Ted Cohn Lay Inspector: Mrs Helen Weatherhead
Dates of inspection:	16 and 17 November 2010

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: North London Rudolf Steiner School

Address of school: 1-3 The Campsbourne
London N8 7PN

Telephone number: 0208 3413770

Fax number: N/A

Email address: info@rudolfsteiner.london.sch.uk

Proprietor: The Trustees of the North London Rudolf Steiner School

Name of the Chair of the College of Teachers: Ms Janet Quartermaine

Name of the Chair of the Trustees: Dr Sue Peat

Name of Administrator: Ms Gabriele Woelfle

DfE number: 309/6067

Type of school: Independent school associated with the Steiner Fellowship

Age range of pupils and students: 3 to 6

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll: (Full-time) Boys: 0 Girls: 0
(Part-time) Boys: 27 Girls: 9

Number of children under 5: Boys: 18 Girls: 3

Number of pupils with statements of special educational need: Boys: 0 Girls: 0

Annual fees: £3,084 to £3,852

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

Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley
Supporting Inspector: Mr Ted Cohn
Lay Inspector: Mrs Helen Weatherhead

Dates of inspection: 16 and 17 November 2010

SECTION 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:

The North London Rudolf Steiner School was established in 1985. There are currently 36 children attending part time. Twenty-four children currently receive three and four year old funded places. When not at school, the children are educated at home under individual agreements made by their parents or carers with the school. The school is held in part of the Campsbourne Baptist Church in Hornsey, North London. As the school follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, it is run by a College of Teachers supported by Trustees. An administrator is responsible for the daily running of the school. A playgroup is also held on the same premises; this is registered with and inspected separately by Ofsted. The school aims "to provide a safe, homely environment where children feel confident in their own unique abilities and where each stage of development is recognised and supported. [The school provides] nourishing opportunities for children to learn experientially and feel the joy of discovery. [It has] a strong emphasis on seasonal rhythm".

Summary of main findings:

North London Rudolf Steiner School is a good school with some outstanding features. The overall quality of education is good. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is their behaviour. The school's engagement with parents and carers is outstanding and the informative website addresses frequently asked questions and provides links to other useful sites. The curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage moves seamlessly into the provision for the older children.

What the school does well:

- Its spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding;
- the children's behaviour is outstanding; and
- it engages very effectively with parents.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

The school meets the regulatory requirements, but requirements for EYFS are not fully met and are listed at the end of the report.

The school complies with the recent Equality Act 2010 which includes the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

Next Steps:

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

- establish a staff appraisal system in order to improve further the quality of teaching;
- record more clearly sanctions imposed upon children for serious misbehaviour and the reasons for these; and
- ensure that responsibility for risk assessments rests with experienced staff.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good overall. It follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and matches this to the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Children attend for a maximum of twenty hours a week and for the rest of their time they are home educated. This has been agreed by both the school and parents and carers with a signed agreement.

The school has received exemptions or modifications to parts of the EYFS, including communication, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. This enables it to follow the Steiner Waldorf curriculum more appropriately. The EYFS and the educational needs of the children aged over five are appropriately met, and the curriculum provides a seamless progression in supporting children's development. They are able to develop confidence and independence and so meet that aim of the school. The children are recognised as individuals and the teachers' daily reflections on each child, recorded appropriately in notebooks, provide a means by which the play activities can be tailored to meet individual needs, especially in personal, social and emotional education. This is a strength of the school and is highly successful for the whole age range. Speaking and listening skills are particularly well developed and the children also acquire expertise in other aspects of literacy and in numeracy. The children learn through direct experiences, both in organising their own play activities in the classroom and also in the well developed outdoor area which has been significantly improved in recent years. All children make good progress. The recently appointed garden teacher is continuing to extend the scope of the outdoor areas and the curricular opportunities these provide.

The school rightly places a strong emphasis on the rhythm of the day, of the week and of festivals during the year. Together with the planned repetition of stories, of thanks for food being said in a different language each week, and of daily routines, this adds to the children's sense of confidence and security.

The coordinator for special educational needs works effectively with children identified with such needs, and is supported by the school's doctor and eurythmy therapist where appropriate. Children for whom English is an additional language are well supported through immersion in the English language and the staff ensure that English is always used whilst the child is in class.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good overall. It ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. The teachers are well qualified and highly experienced and several are studying to extend their qualifications and expertise. They know their children very well and establish relationships that are always good and often excellent. They provide excellent models of courtesy for children to emulate and generally manage behaviour very effectively, creating a classroom atmosphere which is highly conducive to learning and collaboration.

Various activities encourage and deepen children's knowledge and skills effectively, for example understanding of the rhythm of the seasons and the skills of needlework, and children are given wide scope for imaginative play, collaboratively and individually. In the best lessons where planning and unobtrusive guidance ensures that children engage in purposeful activity, they are enthusiastic, often concentrating intently on what they are doing and make good progress in developing their knowledge and skills. Sometimes pupils do not have sufficiently focused guidance to help them develop their learning, such as when sorting and counting leaves. Transitions from one activity to another are well-managed although occasionally the pace of learning slows and transition becomes leisurely. Resources support learning satisfactorily.

The teaching generally makes a good contribution to children's learning and progress towards the relevant Early Learning Goals, with particular strengths in personal, social and emotional development, speaking and listening and creative development. Despite exemptions granted by the Department for Education reducing the scope for achieving high scores in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile, most children still achieve scores that are above the national average aggregated score. The older children are taught separately for one session each week, and this is used particularly effectively to develop their more advanced skills and understanding. Overall, progress is good throughout the age range. Pupils with special needs are carefully diagnosed to identify ways of supporting them. Helpful advice is provided to teaching staff about how to best meet these needs, including individual education plans and formal reviews where necessary. Parents are closely involved in the whole process.

Assessment in the school is generally good. Comments by teachers about children's work are constructive and diagnostic. Helpful records of pupils' progress in learning and achievement are kept, including observation, discussion with parents, photographic evidence and examples of children's work. The Early Years Profile is used effectively to help in tracking the progress during the EYFS. Assessment in Year 1 is still related to the Early Years profile; this is not appropriate for the older children.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is an outstanding feature of the school's provision. The spiritual development of children is at the heart of the school's philosophy and permeates their educational experience, whether through song, art, drama, eurythmy, circle time and the importance of the rhythm of the seasons.

Teachers create harmonious learning communities in their classrooms. They achieve this through modelling exemplary courteous behaviour, combined with gentle but firm guidance and high expectations. As a result, pupils develop a very clear understanding of right and wrong, the importance of respect for others and the value of cooperation and negotiation, which they enact in their daily life in the school. This leads to outstanding behaviour. The spiritual awareness of the children and their

social and moral development help them to gain a strong sense of self-esteem, confidence and a growing self-knowledge.

Children develop a growing understanding of the importance of living in harmony with nature and of respect for, and celebration of, different cultures and traditions. They do this through the celebration of festivals, stories and the sharing of experiences of a culturally diverse community.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school meets the welfare, health and safety needs of the children effectively. It has a good behaviour policy, supported by an anti-bullying policy. Both are particularly well implemented, encouraging and supporting good behaviour and cooperation between the children. Risk assessments are made for visits, although these are not made by named individuals but instead by the College of Teachers. Fire safety and first aid procedures are well documented and implemented. The school has a written First Aid policy. Teachers are well deployed, especially in the outdoor area. Registers are well maintained and the school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act (2010).

The children are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through the well planned and varied snacks provided each day, many of which involve cooking and baking, including making their own bread and butter each week. The garden is increasingly being used to grow organic vegetables and fruit for the children to harvest and eat.

The children are encouraged adopt safe practices by having good all-weather clothing to go outside and by knowing how to use garden tools and kitchen equipment appropriately. A strong emphasis is placed on hygiene, both when helping to prepare snacks, before eating these and after using the toilets. Much of this is developed through imitation and by the adults modelling good practices.

Staff have received appropriate safeguarding training from Haringey local authority and this is regularly updated. Sanctions taken to deal with serious misbehaviour are recorded in the teachers' notes on pupils as part of on-going records. Whilst this satisfies the legal requirements, it does not provide a sufficiently clear separate statement of the actions taken nor of the reasons for this.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 4 - Suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors

The trustees and staff have all undergone the appropriate safe-guarding checks to ensure that they are suitable people to be working with children, as have the volunteers. The staff are well-qualified and highly experienced and several are studying to up-grade their qualifications and expertise.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises are suitable, although some of the décor is worn. It occupies part of church premises. It has three main rooms, one of which has to be cleared most days for use by community groups in the evening and a parent and toddler group one morning. There is also an office, adequate toilets and an appropriately equipped kitchen which is shared with the church. The rooms are well organised and of a good size for the current numbers of children. They are generally clean and tidy.

The outdoor area is a significant asset in the urban environment of the school and good use is made of it every day. It has been redeveloped recently and planting continues. Kitchen waste is composted to provide fertiliser for the vegetables and other plants.

Risk assessments are made regarding the premises; however, for the last two years these have been collated by unqualified volunteers from Germany on a one year placement which constitutes their National Service. Although the regulatory requirements are met, this arrangement is not satisfactory.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The provision of information to parents is outstanding. Access to information comes in many forms: through home visits, the informative website with its section on frequently asked questions and links to other useful sites, the weekly "Hummingbird" newsletter; the parent handbook; open forum parent meetings and class notice boards.

There are individual termly appointments when parents can discuss their child's progress and teachers can share a summary of the EYFS profile.

The sixteen questionnaires returned by parents were overwhelmingly positive. Words and phrases such as "nurturing", "stimulating", "fosters curiosity", "useful feedback and encouragement" were used. One parent wrote, "I have learnt to be a better parent by following the staff/school's model of education and child development".

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 7 - The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The school's procedure for handling complaints is fully compliant and meets all the regulations.

There were no formal complaints in the past twelve months.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SECTION C: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT, AND MAINTENANCE OF THE ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

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

North London Rudolf Steiner School is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. The company is represented by the Association which consists of long-term associates and friends of the school, trustees, teachers, the special needs co-ordinator and the school administrator.

There are three Trustees all of whom have been connected with the school for many years. They hold ultimate legal and financial responsibility for the school and provide support and guidance in executive matters when it is requested. They have a strong trust in the College of Teachers. With the exception of the setting of salaries, they delegate all executive decisions to the College. This is a small group of five experienced teachers and administrators, who, out of a deep commitment to Anthroposophy and Waldorf education, ensure that this impulse inspires their practice. This includes creating and implementing policies and procedures, dealing with staffing matters and working on curriculum development and future school planning. College decisions are arrived at through consensus.

A larger Faculty of all other staff plus College members meet fortnightly and work intensively on child development, child studies, planning events and festivals. The administrator plays a key role in the running of the school.

The partnership between parents and the school is exceptional. Out of the recently developed school plan, a variety of school support parent groups have been established, including craft, gardening, green, parent talks, fundraising and newsletter teams. The ethos of the school permeates all aspects of school life.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

The school is small in scale and the atmosphere is intimate, and occasionally work boundaries may become blurred. With a small staff, the school still must comply with the same requirements and regulations as larger schools. The school works closely with the Steiner Fellowship Code of Practice and looks forward to the publication of the reviewed and updated Code. To facilitate clarity and transparency, however, the College of Teachers might consider the following:

- improve the clarity of role by describing in more specific terms the tasks of employees, volunteers and Trustees;
- improve communication by ensuring that the College of Teachers minutes are distributed for consideration along with the agenda prior to the following meeting; and
- identify a portion of the staff development budget for regular staff evaluation and appraisal.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The outcomes for children are good. They achieve well and enjoy their learning, showing maturity and self confidence as well as outstanding behaviour. Their confidence reflects the extent to which they feel safe and this also enables them to make positive contributions to the life of the school. Healthy lifestyles are extremely well promoted through snacks, when cultivating and harvesting vegetables and fruit, and in good personal hygiene routines. They are developing good skills for the future.

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of provision is good overall, with aspects that are satisfactory. In the best practice, adults engage with the children, encouraging them to explore materials and develop their understanding. Elsewhere, the adults are less involved and, although they observe the children, they do not use equipment and materials, providing models for the children to emulate. All adults are well aware of the children as individuals and they carefully reflect on their learning and developmental needs. A significant feature of the Kindergarten classes is the continuity of provision and hence learning from the EYFS to the later curriculum.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Leadership and management are good: it successfully supports improvement. Resources are well deployed. Equality and diversity are well promoted. The school values the children's diverse backgrounds whilst ensuring that where they have English as an additional language, the children are able to develop their use and understanding of English rapidly.

Safeguarding is good, however some risk assessments have been coordinated by unqualified volunteers new to this country and others do not address the adult to child ratio requirements for specific outings. Risk assessments of the environment are made but do not always name the person making the assessment. Each class teacher is the key person for the eighteen children in their class; however they hold daily discussions with classroom assistants and volunteers to ensure that children's needs are shared and known.

Self evaluation is good and the constant review clearly leads to improvement in the provision. Partnerships with the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, the local authority and others are good. The school engages extremely effectively with parents and carers. Not only are relationships outstanding, but the website is comprehensive and useful, providing answers to frequently asked questions and links to other useful sites. There is also a secure on-line parent to parent communication facility.

Overall effectiveness: how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The school meets the needs of children in the EYFS effectively. They make good progress, as is shown in their EYFS Profile results where the majority attain levels

above national average expectations, despite exemption from being taught some elements such as formal reading and writing. The school has a good capacity to maintain improvement.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

No.

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

- In making risk assessments for outings, consider whether it is appropriate to exceed the normal adult-child ratio requirements; and
- Record by whom risk assessments have been checked.

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.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk