

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:	Ringwood Waldorf School
DfE number:	835/6022
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mr Ted Cohn Supporting Inspectors: Dr Martin Bradley Mrs Sara Wiggins Lay Inspector: Miss Deborah Leah
Dates of inspection:	28 February-1 March 2012

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Section C: The quality of organisation and management

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Ringwood Waldorf School
Address of school:	Folly Farm Lane Ashley Ringwood Hants, BH24 2NN
Telephone number:	01425 472664
Email address:	mail@ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk
Proprietor:	The Sheiling Trust
Name of the Chair of the College of Teachers:	Ms Louise Tiley
Name of the Chair of the Trustees:	Mr Colin Lumber
Name of Administrator:	Mr Nigel Revill
DfE number:	835/6022
Type of school:	Independent school associated with the Steiner Fellowship
Age range of pupils and students:	3 to 17
Gender of pupils:	Male and female
Total number on roll: (Full time) (Part time)	Boys: 131 Girls: 107 Boys: 9 Girls: 17
Number of children under 5	Boys: 9 Girls: 17
Number of post-16 students:	Boys: 6 Girls: 5
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	Boys: 0 Girls: 0
Annual fees:	£3,610 to £6,870
Type of inspection:	Section 162A of the Education Act 2002
Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector:	Mr Ted Cohn
Supporting Inspectors:	Dr Martin Bradley Mrs Sara Wiggins
Lay Inspector:	Miss Deborah Leah

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:

Ringwood Waldorf School is situated in a delightful wooded area just outside the small town of Ringwood in Hampshire. It opened on its current site in 1974 with six pupils. Since then purpose-built accommodation has been developed to meet the needs of growing numbers of pupils, and the school now has pupils from three to seventeen years of age. It currently has 264 pupils, of whom 238 are full-time and 26 attend the Kindergarten part-time. The school has identified 44 pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. No pupil has a formal statement of special educational needs or has difficulties related to speaking English as an additional language.

Specialist accommodation includes rooms for music, eurythmy, science, woodwork, handwork, art and information technology (IT). The school aims to provide a Steiner Waldorf education, seeking to promote the fundamental principle of protecting the right to childhood and creative abilities for life. It follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum based on rhythms and routines of the day, week and year, with learning related to the pupils' stages of development. The Early Years provision has gained exemptions from aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage related to language and communication and knowledge and understanding of the world. In common with other Steiner Waldorf schools, the school has no headteacher and leadership and management is delegated to a College of Teachers, involving at least seven experienced teachers, the administrator and bursar.

The school is part of the Sheiling Trust, which also runs a residential school for children with special educational needs, a residential community for adults with special educational needs and a bio-dynamic farm, which is also a community for adults with special educational needs. The school has access to the land of the Sheiling Trust and some of the facilities of other parts of the Trust, such as those for forging and green wood-turning, as well as the use of the farm as a learning resource. The Sheiling Trust has ultimate responsibility for the legal, administrative and financial aspects of the school, but the governance function has been delegated to the Activity Council for the school, on which some Sheiling trustees sit.

This table lists the names of classes used by the school and their National Curriculum equivalent:

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

Summary of main findings:

The Ringwood Waldorf School provides a good education for its pupils, with some outstanding features; it follows closely the principles of Steiner Waldorf education and achieves its aims well. It is particularly successful in creating an educational community where pupils are happy, feel cherished and develop into mature and self-confident individuals. The curriculum and teaching are good and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning in the main school. In the Kindergarten provision and outcomes are excellent and make a major contribution to learning, although the statutory requirement to report on children's achievement, in relation to the Early Learning Goals assessment criteria, to parents at the end of the Foundation stage is not met. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and all the necessary measures to safeguard children are in place. The premises and accommodation provide an attractive and helpful environment for teaching and learning, but resources for independent learning higher up the school are limited. Parents are very supportive of the school and the education they provide for their children.

The last report raised a small number of issues, which the school has generally addressed successfully. Extra mathematics lessons have been introduced to support continuity and progress in learning mathematics, which is now done well. The quality of teaching has improved and there are better opportunities for all pupils to make good progress, although occasionally the most able pupils are still not fully challenged by the learning tasks set. Some inconsistencies remain in the effectiveness of marking in supporting progress in learning. Formal assessment now takes place on an annual basis and is supported well by more frequent informal monitoring and assessment. The school has a policy for pupils with English as an additional language. Attendance is now monitored closely at the whole school level and is excellent.

What the school does well:

- it develops a strong sense of community founded on Steiner principles, where pupils want to learn, feel safe and cherished and develop into mature self-confident young people;
- it has outstanding provision and outcomes in the Kindergarten;

- it has teaching and learning that is good overall and excellent in literacy, speaking and listening and the creative arts; and
- its spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.

What the school must do to comply with the statutory requirements:

The school must:

- ensure that it reports on children's achievement, in relation to the Early Learning Goals assessment criteria, to parents at the end of the Foundation stage.

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

The school fully meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Next Steps

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

- develop a central Special Educational Needs register that records fully all forms of support for pupils with individual learning needs;
- clarify roles and responsibilities in relation to governance of the school;
- ensure that marking is more consistently effective in supporting progress in learning.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. Throughout the school a strong emphasis is placed on the rhythms of the daily routine, weekly and seasonal activities and of festivals. This is especially evident in the Kindergarten classes and the Lower School, and reflects the school's commitment to the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. In the Lower School, the stability of staffing has enabled the same teachers to stay with their class throughout the eight years between Class 1 to Class 8. This has provided significant continuity and the pupils commented extremely positively on the benefits they considered it provides.

Overall, the curriculum is wide ranging and well balanced, with a strong emphasis on the aesthetic, creative and practical areas. The core curriculum provision is determined by the Steiner Waldorf themes, known as main lessons. These involve teaching sessions of normally about two hours in length, with themes and topics that run for several weeks. They have a strong focus on literacy, numeracy, music, humanities and to a lesser extent science. The main lessons provide much of the core provision for English and mathematics, but since the last inspection extra lessons have been introduced that help to ensure continuity of learning and the acquisition by all pupils of at least secure skills in literacy and numeracy, which addresses critical comments made about continuity of learning in mathematics. The main lessons are supplemented by lessons in French and German from an early age and a wide range of provision that caters particularly well for the aesthetic, creative and practical areas. This includes subjects such as handwork and eurythmy (an art of movement), clay modelling, craft and woodwork, farming, games and drama for younger pupils and bothmer (a form of gymnastic exercise), blacksmithing, bookbinding, wood and stone carving, green wood turning, charcoal making, pit forge working and tailoring and dressmaking in the Upper School. These experiences significantly extend the curriculum and pupils' learning.

The curriculum is designed carefully to reflect the Steiner view of child development, so topics are returned to, consolidated and conceptualised at higher levels as pupils proceed through the school. Thus, work on myths and legends links to later work on ancient Egypt, religious studies work on the Bible and Moses, and on the aesthetic, moral and spiritual themes encompassed in the story Parzival in the Upper School. The intention is that skills of critical thinking and analysis should form the basis of much of the work in the Upper School. This is well developed in some subjects, but overall these skills are unevenly promoted across the curriculum. Personal, social and health education, including drugs and sex education and careers education, form a distinctive part of the curriculum, whilst all pupils do a period of work experience. Throughout the curriculum great care is taken to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. These are of a high standard. Additionally, social and emotional education is extremely well developed. Pupils are encouraged to consider the feelings of others and to work together. This also enables pupils to make good progress and prepares them effectively for adult life.

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feelings of others and to work together. This also enables pupils to make good progress and prepares them effectively for adult life.

The curriculum is also enriched through exchange visits to overseas schools, funded under the European Union's Comenius programme. Ringwood Waldorf School has developed links with Steiner Waldorf schools in Estonia, Germany, Italy, Spain and Turkey. During the inspection pupils from Classes 8 and 9 returned from a week in Germany where they had worked with counterparts from Estonia and Italy as well as their German hosts developing drama activities, which they had found an exhilarating experience. Another visit to Italy is planned for other pupils later in the year to study folk dancing. The school also has a good range of clubs, which include drama, yoga, chess and games, basketball, badminton, the Upper School instrumental ensemble, and hiking.

At present no external examinations are taken in the Upper School. Where pupils seek entry to either the local comprehensive school or local colleges, they take portfolios of their work for assessment as part of the admissions process. As the school expands its age range into post-16 age ranges, this provision is under review.

There is appropriate provision for pupils with identified learning needs. At present this is insufficiently well coordinated across different forms of support. The Special Educational Needs (SEN) register identifies most pupils who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and who receive support from either the learning support staff or from teaching assistants. Other records, including some IEPs and reports from specialists are held by a variety of people, including the class teachers and the school doctor. Some pupils receive support from therapists and specialists who may work out of school time and others have been identified by their class teacher or subject staff as needing support in class. The school has acknowledged that these pupils should be noted in a single register, with the different forms of support being identified.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The teaching and assessment are good overall, with some outstanding features. In a significant minority of lessons teaching was outstanding and many of these were in the creative arts. Teaching was good or satisfactory in all other lessons, with the exception of one where poor behaviour disrupted learning. The continuity of learning has improved since the last inspection.

The best lessons are marked by highly effective planning, organisation and management and teachers' excellent command of their teaching material, as in a Lower School main lesson, where excellent planning, organisation and teacher knowledge helped pupils to achieve high standards in music, French and mathematics. Teachers have a deep knowledge of pupils personally and of their intellectual capabilities, model excellent practice for pupils to emulate and set demanding but achievable tasks, which encourage rapid progress in learning. This was well illustrated in a music lesson with the Upper School, where specific work on the enunciation of consonants, combined with excellent modelling by the teacher, significantly enhanced the quality of already good singing. Relationships are excellent and pupils are enthused by the teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm.

Explanations and instructions are very clear, questioning is used highly effectively to test and consolidate knowledge and expectations of pupils' achievement are high. Pupils find these lessons deeply satisfying and at times exhilarating experiences.

More generally, teachers provide good explanations and use questioning effectively to test and consolidate understanding, as in a Year 10 lesson discussing the structure of the earth. Relationships with pupils are always good and often excellent, with a strong bond of mutual trust. The teaching is purposeful and draws well on the prior knowledge and learning of pupils. Appropriate attention is paid to individual learning needs, so that, in particular, pupils with learning difficulties are well supported, although sometimes the most able pupils are not fully challenged by tasks set. Classes are managed well and transitions from one activity to the next are efficient, so the pace of learning is sustained. As a result, pupils make good to excellent progress in their learning.

In a relatively small minority of lessons the teaching was satisfactory and in one lesson it was unsatisfactory. These lessons reflect a variety of issues such as an occasional uncertainty in the teacher's command of their subject material, a failure to identify learning tasks that are fully suitable in the range of learning needs of pupils, the slow pace of learning and, in one instance, the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of pupils.

Learning support for pupils is good and much appreciated by teachers, pupils and parents. Learning support staff work closely with teachers and several instances of significant improvement in learning as a result were noted. Individual education plans often provide good advice and guidance to teachers and both pupils and teachers benefit from this. Occasionally they do not provide a sufficiently sharp diagnosis of the learning difficulties being experienced and the formal diagnostic analysis of learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not always done early enough. Occasionally the school does not provide sufficient support to deal with the range of learning needs and/or behavioural problems.

Resources support teaching and learning adequately to well, but the lack of book resources and a library sometimes hinders the development of key research skills. The school has identified the need for a library in its development plans.

Teaching places a strong emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills and pupils become good listeners and articulate quickly, so that they can engage in fruitful discussion from an early age. This is particularly reflected in the ways in which all pupils contribute thoughtfully and effectively in lessons, listening carefully to one another, such as where a Class 6 pupil talked at length about his interest in ancient Egypt and Tutankhamen, using a well constructed model to illustrate his comments. He was questioned closely by other pupils, and the discussion illustrated the nature of historical evidence by acknowledging differences between accounts of the archaeological discoveries. The pupils' willingness and ability to engage in such discussions is a strength of the school. Similarly, pupils quickly develop other skills related to learning to learn, a key aim of the school, including concentrating intently when working individually and focusing sharply on tasks set when working collaboratively. Some high-quality teaching leads to excellent work in the creative arts and notably music. Pupils produce narrative and imaginative writing that is often of a high quality, but opportunities for analytical and evaluative writing, involving the analysis of evidence, the debating the issues and the evaluation of different interpretations are more limited and pupils' skills are not as well developed.

The marking of pupils' work is personally encouraging. Some examples of excellent diagnostic marking, identifying achievement and areas for improvement, were noted, but this was not generally the case. However, oral feedback to pupils about their work often provides helpful guidance about what has been achieved and how pupils can improve. The progress of pupils is also considered and evaluated through teachers' meetings, child studies and the use of standardised tests, and progress is measured in relation to the aims of the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The quality of work in spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is outstanding. Behaviour is good overall and in most classes it is outstanding. The great majority of pupils show a significantly high level of maturity and respect for one another, especially in the youngest classes. In a small number of classes a minority of pupils do not take sufficient responsibility for their own behaviour. Bullying is largely unknown and reported incidents are mainly teasing. The policy for SMSC was last reviewed in 2009, since when the school has extended its age range. A timely review is planned.

There is clear and strong evidence that the pupils enjoy their education. They speak enthusiastically of the support they receive and the ways in which they are encouraged to care for and support each other. They value the support of their teachers, particularly class teachers in the Lower School, and the continuity provided when class teachers move with them from Class 1 to Class 8. They consider that the teaching is supportive and encouraging, with good explanations being used to clarify any problems.

Spiritual development is promoted very effectively through various themes, such as work on myths and legends, biblical themes and world religions, art, eurythmy and music. Close attention is paid to encouraging the pupils to reflect on their own emotions and how others might feel. Such consideration is carefully linked to moral issues and the pupils are clearly aware of right and wrong as well as the need to respect others' views.

Social development is a major strength of the school. The great majority of pupils show great respect for each other. They listen to one another carefully and contribute to discussions with respect and thoughtful consideration. They have many opportunities to demonstrate that they are responsible and trustworthy, which helps to develop pupils' self-confidence. For example, they raise funds to support the Goderich Waldorf School in Sierra Leone. Older pupils also work with parents to bake cakes that are sold at the Glastonbury Festival, which raises a significant sum for the school. Pupils contribute very effectively to the school as a community as well as to the wider Sheiling Trust organisation through work at Sturts Farm and with the Lantern Community for adults with learning needs. During the inspection pupils worked with parents and past pupils to rehearse a variety show. Pupils from Class 8 also assist those in Class 1 in festivals such as the Christmas play. Work placements are organised in the Upper School and the broad curriculum includes topics that enhance pupils' economic understanding, as well as developing good literacy and numeracy skills.

Cultural development is promoted strongly across the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about the beliefs and cultural traditions of Ancient civilisations, such as the early cities of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome; French and German literary traditions and cultural and lifestyles; folksongs, different genres of music and art and crafts from many countries; the philosophical beliefs and traditions of the major religions and the social make-up of modern England; as well as myths and legends, notably the Norse legends and the first of the mediaeval Grail romances, Parzival. The school also puts on a wide variety of plays and musical performances for parents and local people, for instance, Class 6 rehearsed an opera and the Upper School instrumental ensemble some jazz pieces for future performances during the inspection. The international school exchange visits significantly extend pupils' awareness of other cultures and are greatly enjoyed and valued by the pupils.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for safeguarding and promoting the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. Teachers, other staff and volunteers are vigilant, educate pupils well about the importance of health and safety and ensure that all the necessary precautions are taken to ensure the safety of pupils. They also reinforce a strong sense of community that is a feature of the school and are strongly committed to the personal well-being of pupils.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are fully appropriate and have appropriate regard to the DfE guidance. Thorough risk assessments are carried out for various activities, including visits and trips. The necessary policies are in place and implemented diligently, although they are not always reviewed as frequently as would be reflected in good practice. This has been recognised by the school and a system to monitor policies and update them more frequently is being developed.

Arrangements for child protection and first aid provision are good. The designated persons with responsibility for child protection have undertaken relevant training and have conducted the training of other staff at appropriate intervals. The written First Aid policy is clear and comprehensive and all staff have recently been trained in basic first aid procedures. Some staff have had higher level training as well.

Through the curriculum, the importance of healthy lifestyles is emphasised and discussed with pupils. The curriculum also provides good opportunities for physical exercise of various kinds. Parents are given helpful directive advice about what pupils should bring for lunch and when hot food is provided it is healthy and nutritious. Admission and attendance registers are in order and electronic data is backed up regularly to a secure off-school site location. Attendance is good, and unexplained absences are followed up rapidly. The school now keeps records of whole-school attendance, which it did not at the time of the last inspection. All aspects of the fire regulations are met and the school complies fully with the provisions of the Equality Act.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

All the necessary checks have been carried out to ensure that staff, volunteers and trustees are suitable to work with children and be involved in the work of the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The quality of the premises and accommodation is good overall. The premises have been developed and extended as the school has grown. The newest block contains a good-sized hall/gymnasium with adjoining eurythmy and music rooms as well as administrative areas. Outdoor play areas are of good size and include grassed and hard surfaced spaces.

Classrooms are adequate for the present numbers and ages of pupils. A number of the Lower School classes have over twenty pupils. The size of the rooms used by these groups is currently adequate, enabling space to be cleared for activities and different groupings of pupils.

In addition to the hall and the specialist rooms linked to it, there is specialist accommodation for science, woodwork, handwork and art and IT. The Kindergarten has four classrooms in separate buildings with good outdoor play space. The school makes effective use of the local environment for activities such as science and walks. Pupils benefit from being able to use the farm as a learning resource for work on farming, agriculture and other topics, whilst their contacts with the residential communities extend their social education.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The school provides good information for prospective and current parents and carers. The web-site provides full and helpful information, including key policies and the very comprehensive parents' handbook, full of detailed information and guidance for parents. A full set of policies is available from the school office. The great majority of parents completing the parental questionnaire administered at the time of the inspection were very positive about the school.

All parents receive the parents' handbook, updated annually, which describes the school's ethos and organisation, amongst many other things. It highlights helpfully the importance of parental support, and understanding of how the school works, to the success of their children's education. The handbook explains how the cultural life of festivals and the inclusive economic principles of the school community are related to the social life of the school and its practical details. It is an excellent store of information for parents, but is not always fully accurate when situations change during the year. Parents are also invited to make use of the parents' lending library, which includes helpful texts about various aspects of Steiner Waldorf education and philosophy.

The school uses notice boards effectively as reminders of forthcoming events and activities. The weekly newsletter also posts forthcoming school events and reviews recent ones. It includes a letter to parents from the College of Teachers which aims to encourage and inspire their goodwill. Once or twice a term the letter also includes minutes from the regular whole-school community meetings, at which parents are encouraged to air their views. The colourful and attractive school magazine is produced annually. It illustrates artistically the vibrant community life of the school, as well as celebrating pupils' work, including articles by teachers and informing parents of important news.

Parents' evenings are held each term, when parents consult with teachers about the progress that their children are making and their personal well-being. Parents and staff can also consult with each other at any other time, if necessary. In addition, parents receive an informative annual school report that identifies clearly individual children's progress and achievements throughout the year, together with aims for the coming year.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The complaints policy and procedures meet the statutory requirements. No formal complaints have been made over 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

The Ringwood Waldorf School is unusual among British Steiner Waldorf Schools because of its two-tier governance structure. The Council of the Sheiling Trust carries the legal responsibility for its four activities, which are managed separately and independently. The school is one of these. The Camphill Sheiling School, Sturts Farm, the Lantern Community of adults and the school share a background philosophy, based on Rudolf Steiner's principles of community building, as well as many practical interests: healthy food, the nurture of developing children, biodynamic farming and social care. The school's three Camphill neighbours afford informal help and support to the school, with many benefits for its pupils and their families, both directly and indirectly. These include farm visits, an excellent shop and café adjacent to the school site, and administrative advice.

The Sheiling Trust delegates to the school's Council tasks of governance. However, individual members of the Council have not been given specified areas of responsibility and all the tasks are done through informal agreement. Council members are currently undergoing training to improve their understanding of governance.

The school is well managed by the College of Teachers, whose members include the administrator, the bursar and a minimum of seven experienced teachers. The strong leadership of the College of Teachers is recognised throughout the school community. Its meetings are effectively run, clear decisions are reached by consensus and carefully recorded, with action points noted and followed up. Channels of communication are also effective in ensuring that staff, parents and trustees are well informed about news and developments. The college ensures that regular appraisals of class teachers are carried out, and arranges other appraisals when these are considered necessary.

Good use is made of the Steiner Waldorf Advisory Service, and mentoring of new teachers is an embedded practice at the school. Systematic co-mentoring, which has been a strength of the school, is not currently in place.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

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

- improve the school's policies by continuing to revise and update them thoroughly;
- improve governance by clarifying individual roles and responsibilities of school Council members, as delegated to them by the Sheiling Trust; and
- improve support for all teachers by re-instating the practice of regular co-mentoring among all teachers.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Information about the school

The school includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting, divided into a kindergarten class with children of three- to four-years of age and three kindergarten classes for children of three to six years of age. At the time of the inspection the school had exemptions from parts of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS, relating to the formal teaching of literacy and the use of ICT. These elements were therefore excluded from this inspection. Apart from these elements, the school delivers the EYFS learning and development requirements highly effectively.

The outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. The children thoroughly enjoy their learning, they concentrate exceptionally well and, as a result, their levels of achievement are outstanding. Their progress is particularly rapid in speaking and listening, physical development and creative skills. Social and emotional development is strongly supported by caring staff, who ensure that children feel safe and confident. Children are highly articulate, ask many questions and are quick learners. They are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles, through the daily opportunities for learning outside, in the garden and during the regular walks around the local area, which provide helpful opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The children are highly self reliant and make very positive contributions, demonstrating the excellent skills they are acquiring for the future. They take responsibility willingly as they help to clear away equipment both inside and outside, and even the very youngest children try to put on their own waterproofs and wellington boots. Children show a strong awareness of how to stay safe, from the creation of secure complex structures using frames and planks inside classrooms, to opening and closing gates on walks and the careful following of the clear expectations of their teachers. They initiate activities and explore ideas and interests in great depth, showing excellent levels of independence. For example, children created their own fairy garden, making a small flower bed, adding a swimming pool and sandpit and providing purposely small items of 'food' for the tiny creatures of their active imaginations.

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of provision in the EYFS is outstanding. The children are supported by carefully planned routines which follow rhythms of the day, the week and the year and which strongly promote their learning and development. Teaching is excellent and encourages children to develop their ideas and learn through the use of all their senses; for example listening intently in story time, gazing at candle light as they eat their snacks, verbalising their thoughts during imaginary telephone conversations whilst at play and considering the texture of a wealth of natural materials during sewing, felting, finger knitting, weaving and modelling with bees wax. A strongly inclusive approach meets the needs of children well in the mixed-age groups, enabling them to learn from each other. The classroom environments are carefully planned to promote development in all six areas of learning through creative play and purposeful learning experiences. The excellent relationships, the gentle guidance of staff and consistent approach to discipline make a major contribution to the excellent behaviour of the children. Thorough planning and assessment

procedures support learning, with the best involving daily assessments of both the routines of the day and the progress of individuals. High priority is placed on children's health, safety and well-being. The after-school afternoon club is well organised and provides suitable activities.

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

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in the EYFS is good. Kindergarten staff work as a highly committed team and share responsibilities well. They hold regular discussions to develop their practice and identify the individual needs of children. Self evaluation, alongside staff training and review from the Steiner Waldorf fellowship, has a positive impact on learning. Relationships with parents and carers are strong through daily contact, informative parent' evenings and the many opportunities parents have to be involved in the life of the school. Information collected from the careful tracking of the progress of children is shared with parents orally. Parents have not yet been given the required written summary reporting on each child's progress against the Early Learning Goals assessment criteria, although arrangements are in place to remedy the omission for the current academic year. A range of policies and procedures, including risk assessments and information for parents, are available but are in several different locations rather than being readily accessible in a centralised location to enable easy review. The safeguarding of children's welfare is good. Staff take great care to ensure the safety of the premises and of activities both in school and on walks. All the necessary employment checks are carried out and recorded. Equality and diversity are outstandingly well promoted; older children support younger children resulting in excellent relationships across the age groups. Each class makes highly effective use of its resources.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good. The staff know the children very well and are able to meet their individual needs with care and sensitivity. Staff are strongly committed to and have a good understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for development, ensuring their capacity to sustain the high standards currently achieved and continue to improve.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

The school meets most, but not all of the statutory requirements, and is already addressing the exception.

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

In order to comply with the Independent Schools' Standards Regulations 2010 the school should:

- provide parents with a written summary reporting on each child's progress against the Early Learning Goals assessment criteria at the end of the Foundation stage.

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