

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship

INSPECTION REPORT

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

Name of school:	St Paul's Steiner School
DCSF number:	206/6379
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley Supporting Inspectors: Mrs Meg Buckingham Mr Mike Thirkell Lay Inspector: Mr Martin Hardiman
Dates of inspection:	1 st to 3 rd December 2009

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: St. Paul's Steiner School

Address of the school: 1 St Paul's Road
Islington
London
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Telephone number: 0207 226 4454

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Email address: office@stpaulssteinerschool.org

Proprietor: St Paul's Steiner Project 2

Name of the Chair of the College of Teachers: Ms Roxana Hewitt

Name of the Chair of the Trustees: Mr Jacob Tas

Name of Administrator: Ms Jane Gerhard

DCSF number: 206/6379

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

Age range of pupils and students: 3 to 14

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll: (Full time) Boys: 57 Girls: 58
(Part time) Boys: 13 Girls: 10

Number of children under 5: Boys: 8 Girls: 16

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

Annual fees: Kindergarten £4565 per year
Classes I to VIII £5250 to 5940 per year

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

Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley
Supporting Inspector: Mrs Meg Buckingham
Supporting Inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell
Lay Inspector: Mr Martin Hardiman

Dates of inspection: 1st to 3rd December 2009

PART A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection:

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

Information about the school:

St Paul's Steiner School is an independent co-educational school for pupils aged between three and fourteen. Admission is non-selective. The school leases a grade 2* listed nineteenth century church which is being converted by parents and friends of the school for its present use. Fund raising has been a major activity since the school was opened fourteen years ago. An adjacent church hall is also rented. The school follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. At the time of the inspection there were 162 pupils on roll, a slight increase since the last inspection in 2007. Four pupils have statements of special educational need. The school's aims are to educate each child to fulfil their own potential, to educate for life by equipping young children with the tools and confidence to cope with academic and other challenges and to be socially inclusive. It also aims to develop the site as a cradle to grave learning and cultural resource for the local community. The premises are used outside school hours by community groups and for adult/ parent education activities. A parent and toddler group also meets in the school but was not within the scope of the inspection.

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

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

Summary of main findings:

The overall quality of the education provided is good and the school has made progress since the last inspection. The curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of the pupils effectively, although some practical activities are restricted by the lack of specialist facilities. Teaching and assessment are good overall. The quality of teaching is good; in the Kindergarten it is particularly good and at times outstanding. Elsewhere whilst some lessons are outstanding or good, others are satisfactory and a small minority are inadequate. Pupils make good progress in their learning over time.

The quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as is their overall behaviour. In a few lessons, difficult behaviour by a minority of pupils is not always well managed; in such instances pupils' learning is interrupted and their progress slows temporarily. The school has rightly identified high staff turnover as an issue, and has put in place mentoring systems to address this and the related concerns about behaviour. Pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Safeguarding is well promoted throughout the school; in the Kindergarten it is outstanding. Pupils commented on how well they feel cared for.

What the school does well:

- it establishes significantly good relationships which support the positive atmosphere for learning;
- its staff and other adults know the pupils well and use this knowledge very effectively to support learning and personal development;
- it has developed particularly good policies for health and welfare and implements these effectively; and
- it provides a good and often outstanding start to the children's education in the Kindergarten classes.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

- improve the aspects of the premises referred to in the body of the report.

What the school must do to comply with the statutory legal requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage:

- it meets all the statutory requirements apart from providing a written summary reporting on each child's progress against the early learning goals and the assessment scales.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002:

- it fully meets the requirements of the DDA.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is guided by the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum and supported by a policy set out in the parents' handbook, by a range of Steiner and other documentation, and by the teachers' yearly planning. The curriculum places emphasis on providing opportunities for pupils' personal as well as academic development. Provision and planning provide a suitably wide range of learning opportunities that are carefully matched to the children's ages and to Steiner expectations for their development. Teaching is carefully planned to achieve this aim and age related materials and resources are identified. The curriculum is appropriate and accessible to all pupils whatever their ability

In planning and delivering lessons, teachers take every opportunity to relate aspects of subjects to one another. Teachers' planning carefully considers a progressive pattern for learning supported by the rhythm of the daily, weekly and yearly programmes. This rhythm is reflected in the Main Lessons taught by the class teacher. These are timetabled for each class each morning throughout the academic year and generally last for two hours. Main Lesson themes are followed for periods of up to a month and their themes contain a variety of core subjects and cultural activities, such as reciting verses, movement, recall, rhythmic work, mathematics, music, singing, writing and craft skills.

The curriculum provides pupils of all abilities and aptitudes with a wide range of learning experiences. Pupils take a range of subjects including English, mathematics, sciences, humanities and arts. English and mathematics are taught both within Main Lessons and as discrete subjects. Two languages, French and German, are taught from Class 1. These lessons are purely oral for the first three years of pupils' language experience. Great emphasis is placed throughout the curriculum on developing pupils' skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. Speaking and listening skills are notably well developed as pupils move through the school. A range of arts and crafts are available, although the workshop for woodwork is currently not used. Pupils in Classes 1, 4 and 7 have lessons in eurythmy, an expressive movement art. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is carefully related to their overall social development and is identified throughout the curriculum from the Kindergarten. Lessons include aspects of personal development within physiology and stress the dangers and misuse of drugs. Visits by a local police officer support aspects of the PSHE course, for example in relation to awareness of road safety. The school encourages pupils to lead a healthy life. The facilities for PE and games, including the use of a local sports centre are appropriate. Older pupils report that they are enjoying the opportunity of learning to sail at a local reservoir. Pupils in Classes 7 and 8 receive helpful careers' education lessons. Careful consideration is given to preparing pupils for the next stage of their education and their move to other schools. To this end, links are being made with schools that are likely to be most suitable for their pupils. As a result of the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, communication skills and social skills, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

The school makes good provision for pupils identified as having learning difficulties and those with statements of special education needs. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are prepared setting out the requirements of their statements. The IEPs are carefully addressed using a range of strategies, including in-class support and individual support as required. Statements are reviewed regularly and are used appropriately to inform class teachers' curriculum planning as well as specialist support. This support, such as that provided by an art therapist, is appropriately used. Teaching assistants work effectively and unobtrusively with class teachers. The progress of pupils with special learning needs is carefully monitored. All aspects of their development are supported by good strategies for liaison between the well-informed special needs co-ordinator, teachers and parents. Teachers' planning provides for identified gifted and talented older pupils in mathematics and modern languages.

The school has a very relevant programme of enrichment linked to pupils' curriculum experience. For example, this year Class 6 walked the length of Hadrian's Wall as part of their study of ancient Rome and Class 7, who are learning to sail, will sail to France, as part of the theme of the 'Age of Discovery'. Class 5 represent the school at an annual 'Olympic' gathering of other Steiner schools on the extensive grounds of a sister school each June.

The quality of teaching and assessment

In the majority of lessons, the quality of teaching is good and occasionally is outstanding; on some occasions, it is satisfactory and in a very few lessons is inadequate. The school has identified high staff turnover as an issue. It has put in place mentoring systems which are part of its ongoing strategy of professional development to address the effects of staff turnover and to minimise the disruption to pupils' learning. Training has included the management of issue relating to behaviour.

Where teaching is outstanding or good, the lesson is carefully prepared and the learning is well organised to build on pupils' previous knowledge and skills. In these lessons, pupils are clear about the purpose of their learning and what they have to achieve by the end of the session. The class is managed effectively so that pupils work at an appropriate pace. Lessons are presented in an interesting and engaging way and, because teachers know the pupils well, the tasks are appropriately matched to their learning needs. There is a purposeful atmosphere underpinned by good relationships, often with good humour. These factors combine to give pupils confidence to apply themselves, to enjoy their learning and to make good progress. In the satisfactory lessons some of these good characteristics are present. However, the work is not always tailored successfully to individuals' abilities. Whilst teachers have a variety of strategies to bring pupils back when they go off the task and are inattentive, these routines are not firmly established to enable learning to run smoothly; consequently, achievement is constrained. In a small minority of lessons, the difficult behaviour of one or two pupils is not managed successfully; too much time is needed to gain the classes' attention, so that the pace of work is too slow.

Pupils' achievements are assessed regularly in a variety of ways that helps teachers monitor their progress closely. A strength is that teachers know their pupils very well, and this good knowledge of individual pupils' aptitudes and abilities is used effectively in planning lessons. Methods of recording ongoing assessment, such as

tests and quizzes, vary from teacher to teacher but progress is monitored through child and class studies. Both personal and academic progress is carefully considered. Marking varies in quality and quantity; however, overall it is satisfactory. Class teachers rely on discussions with pupils to say what needs to be improved. Older pupils are developing useful skills in assessing their work.

Screening tests for aspects of literacy, reading and computation administered by an external consultant provide teachers with another useful measure of progress. Usually this is undertaken in Classes 2, 4 6 and 8, although recently this has been done for other classes as well.

No national tests are taken at any stage. In recent years pupils in Classes 7 and 8 have been assessed internally using National Curriculum measures in mathematics. These results indicate that by the time they leave, pupils achieve average or above average levels for their age. Taken together with evidence from the work seen during the inspection, these assessments show that over a period of time pupils at St Paul's, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in their learning. This contributes to their preparation for the next stage of their education.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In keeping with the Steiner Waldorf philosophy the verses and actions which start the day, as well as in lessons, help pupils to reflect on the rhythms of seasons and the year and their place within the world. At the time of the inspection pupils had many opportunities to reflect on the season of Advent. Pupils in Class 2 responded very well, each one lighting their own candle, reciting verses on light and singing carols, giving a calm, reflective and tuneful beginning to the day.

The pupils say they enjoy school a good deal and get on well together; 'we know everyone and it is like a family'. This is also demonstrated in their good attendance. They value the opportunities to work together and collaborate successfully.

By the time, they leave pupils are confident, considerate and thoughtful young people. Older pupils talk confidently to visitors and are eager to say what they have learnt. For example, Class 8 enthusiastically shared the activities of a workshop on 'conflict resolution'. They not only found it interesting generally, but in a mature way drew out the issues related to their everyday lives. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. For example, all pupils in Class 8 help younger pupils to learn to read. This gives them confidence, particularly for those pupils who may find some learning difficult themselves. Many classes raise funds for community activities, as well as to contribute to school trips. Class 5 sell home-made produce once a week to help towards school visits. These opportunities not only promote pupils' social skills but also give a practical application for developing mathematical skills and their economic responsibility. Pupils' behaviour is generally good.

The school has a strong commitment to inclusion for all pupils and relationships between staff and pupils are respectful. The underlying ethos of the school enables pupils to know right from wrong and they are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and the effect these may have on others. Through assemblies, through talks by visitors and through Main Lesson topics, pupils gain awareness of public institutions and services within England.

Pupils and staff bring with them a wide diversity of family heritage, for example from South America, Germany, France and the Indian sub-continent. Pupils learn about other cultures as they occur through stories, drama and their Main Lesson topics. These include religions such as Islam and Hinduism, as well as Christianity. Older pupils have visited various places of worship of these world faiths. The positive ethos of respect for others within the school helps pupils develop the skills of tolerance and harmonious relationships with others.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of welfare, health and safety is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for whilst at school, and that they appreciate the care and consideration provided by their teachers and other staff. The school has a comprehensive range of policies relating to welfare, health and safety. These are clear and appropriately implemented. Documentation shows that the school has undertaken all safety checks, including those related to safeguarding against fire. Support has been sought from professional organisations to ensure that the policies meet the requirements, and to ensure the safety of electrical and fire equipment. Records show that fire drills involving pupils are undertaken regularly. Careful guidance has been prepared to support all aspects of child protection. Training for child protection has been undertaken by those responsible for this area. Similarly, First Aid training has been undertaken by teachers for all parts of the school.

Policies to support pupils' good behaviour and to prevent bullying are good. Pupils say that instances of poor behaviour are specific to a small number of individuals, that bullying is very rare, and that they are confident that the school would deal effectively with any bullying. Some parents expressed concern about instances of inappropriate behaviour. The school's strategies for dealing with this are appropriate and correspond to the Steiner philosophy for pupils' development. The school is aware that the implementation of these strategies requires further consideration in a minority of classes. Disciplinary procedures are clear. Supervision is supported by sufficient numbers of staff and carefully prepared duty rotas.

The school now meets all the requirements with regard to the welfare, health and safety of pupils, including those identified by the last report as requiring attention. A good policy for health and safety has been prepared and implemented and the school has clear procedures for maintaining attendance registers.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of the proprietor and staff. Criminal records and other checks are made appropriately and the records are scrupulously maintained on a single central register. Good procedures are followed when checking the suitability of staff prior to their appointment. No supply staff are used.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation. The school occupies a grade 2* listed church built in 1826, and the conversion has been progressing for several years whilst the school has occupied the building. Besides leasing the former church the school rents a hall on the same site and uses this for eurythmy, drama, music and games. As noted in a consultant's report in 2007, the provision for children who are unwell does not meet the regulatory requirements. This report also noted that ventilation in some ground floor classrooms requires attention in order to meet the requirements, although remedies have to take account of the grade 2* listing.

The absence of specialist rooms restricts some practical activities, such as in science, cooking, art and woodwork. The outdoor space on the school site is limited, but good use is made of the adjacent St Paul's Green, a play and recreation area. The Kindergarten classes have their own outdoor play space and make good use of this.

The main building is used at weekends and in the evenings for community meetings, adult education as well as a range of recitals and courses. This supports the school's aim of forging links with its surrounding community.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most but not all of the requirements.

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

- *Ensure that provision for pupils who are unwell includes a separate handbasin for medical purposes (paragraph 5(l)); and*
- *continue to seek to address the issue of ventilation in the ground floor classrooms (paragraph 5(p)).*

The quality of information for parents

The provision of information for parents is particularly good and meets the requirements. School policies are clear, comprehensive and explicit. Where required by the regulations they are made available to parents through the school's website. They are also placed in a prominent position in the school reception area along with details of staff roles and qualifications. Information about the school's curriculum is available in writing and is supplemented at termly parents' meetings.

Parents have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress at regular parent-teacher 'surgeries' and all receive a useful annual report. Before their child starts school parents receive a handbook, which has recently been revised. A fortnightly newsletter contains information regarding forthcoming events.

Budgets are prepared and itemised invoices provided for the relevant local authorities where funding is received for pupils with a statement of special needs. Reviews are undertaken annually.

The responses to the parent questionnaires show considerable support and appreciation for the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The school has a clear and effective complaints procedure that differentiates between concerns and complaints. It is well presented in a flow-chart format and includes all the required elements.

There have been five written complaints in the past twelve months, all of which have been resolved without recourse to the panel stage. The relevant meetings are recorded, along with an agreement signed by the parent confirming that the complaint has been resolved.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART C: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

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

The quality of the organisation and management of the school

St Paul's School is strongly committed to the development of Steiner education and its ethos. St. Paul's Steiner Project 2 is both a limited company and a registered charity and is legally responsible for the running of the school. The Trustees meet monthly. They offer considerable support to the teachers from their wide range of experience and professional capacities. Three of the trustees are current parents, but none are current teachers. Trustees are in frequent contact with the teachers and receive regular reports on developments within the school. Named trustees carry overall responsibility for specific aspects of the school's work.

Day-to-day management, educational policy and practice is delegated to a group within the College of Teachers, who are also named mandate holders for specific areas. This recently introduced mandate system has clarified roles and provides clear lines of responsibility. The group has a weekly meeting, currently chaired by a former teacher who is able to devote fresh energy to a role that had previously become onerous. This is generally regarded as a positive and effective development. The Chair of College also provides cover so that teachers can gain new insights through observing each other's lessons.

The wider College of Teachers concerns itself with child study, both of individual children and whole classes. Significant time is also spent on deepening educational understanding and practice through work on seminal texts and sharing of ideas. This work is often facilitated by an invited expert.

The Resources Management Group consists of parents with identified mandates and the Trustees whose responsibilities are not directly connected with pedagogical matters. As its name implies, this group is primarily concerned with material and financial resources.

Although few in number, the administrators provide a remarkably strong degree of support, aided by parent volunteers. They maintain good daily communications between all those involved in the school, parents and staff alike.

The different parts of the school organisation work together very effectively. Staff benefit from a helpful Staff Handbook and a range of supportive policies. After considerable collaboration, the school has produced an informative and helpful five-year development plan and an action plan for 2009 to 2010. Various options have been considered and there is recognition that the current building could soak up financial resources, whilst remaining constricting as a school environment. The school will continue to explore the possibility of relocating and the potential for St Paul's to become publicly funded.

Teaching quality has been given a high priority and measures are in place to provide continuing professional development, mentoring and advice. Support has been given by the Steiner Waldorf Advisory Service and by an experienced teacher from another Steiner school. A system of regular teacher appraisal has been established.

Financial constraints within the school have exacerbated the difficulty of retaining experienced teachers who could enhance teaching quality.

Despite this and other challenges, the school is managed effectively, has a well-articulated vision, and is taking determined steps towards achieving its aims.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

Yes.

Inclusivity is an important aspect of the school's ethos but it comes at a significant cost that has both a financial and an educational impact. In some respects, this aim competes with provision for improving teaching quality. The two aims need to be kept under review and a careful balance struck between them.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

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

The school has three Kindergarten classes, each of which contains the full age range from three to over six. Overall they meet the needs of the children well and have a good capacity to maintain continuous improvement.

In common with the collegiate approach taken by the school, the Kindergarten teachers share leadership roles, and this provides good overall guidance which is effective in promoting improvement. Resources are deployed sensibly. They consist of a good range of natural materials and artefacts and the children make very effective use of these in their creative play. Equality and diversity are outstandingly well promoted; a major feature of the Kindergarten classes is the way in which older and younger children play together, all benefiting from the support which the older ones give when sharing activities and materials with the younger ones. In one class a 'cake shop' conducted a thriving trade with younger customers requesting items such as 'a chocolate cake for my daughter's birthday' and conducting conversations with the older 'shopkeeper'. In another class, the teacher noted that some boys were beginning to show interest in some weaving looms and quietly provided scissors and other equipment for them to prepare their wool. This apparently simple action did not interfere with the developing activity, but supported it quietly and, by showing interest, encouraged its development. It typified the calm, unobtrusive and sensitive support which promotes the children's concentration and enables activities to continue for significantly long periods. Within each session opportunities are given for the children to experience lively play as well as quieter times sitting at a table, such as when making clay candle holders or using wooden equipment of a variety of sizes on the carpet. This very effectively develops a variety of skills as well as concentration. Safeguarding is outstandingly well promoted. The children are encouraged to select and extend their own activities within a carefully managed environment which is secure. It enables them to explore and play imaginatively. Self-evaluation by the staff is good, and accurately identifies the steps needed to improve their good practice and to plan new activities. The school has good relationships with Islington Local Authority, whose support they value. Their relationships with parents and carers are exceptional. This leads to a shared vision for the children's education.

The quality of provision in the EYFS is good with several outstanding features. The staff and parents have reviewed the EYFS and its associated assessments in the light of the Steiner Waldorf approach and have applied for several exemptions and modifications to the EYFS. These include aspects of communication, language and literacy, of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy and of knowledge and understanding of the world. As the application was pending at the time of the inspection, the Kindergarten classes were not required to deliver these aspects.

The outcomes for children in the EYFS are good in the context of the Steiner curriculum. They achieve extremely well and enjoy their learning. Their confidence reflects the outstanding way in which they feel safe. They are effectively encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through activities such as baking, including the use of the outdoor bread oven, helping to prepare home-made soups, and through the encouragement to bring healthy snacks which are organic where possible. They make particularly good contributions to the life of the class, such as when, without

needing to be asked, they help one another set the table for snack time, tidying up and working with one another. Especially in such social activities, as well as in practical play requiring careful movement and fine dexterity, they develop good skills for the future.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

The school meets all the requirements except one.

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

- *It meets all the statutory requirements apart from providing a written summary reporting on each child's progress against the early learning goals and the assessment scales. At present this is done verbally.*

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