

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:	Wynstones School
DCSF number:	916/6031
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley Supporting Inspectors: Mr Simon Bennett Mr Mike Thirkell Lay Inspector: Mrs Helen Weatherhead
Dates of inspection:	17 th to 19 th November 2009

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: Wynstones School

Address of the school: Church Lane
Whaddon
Gloucestershire
GL4 0UF

Telephone number: 01452 429220

Fax number: 01452 429221

Email address: info@wynstones.com

Proprietor: The Council of Management, Wynstones Ltd

Name of the Chair of the College of Teachers: Ms Heidi Duffield

Name of the Chair of the Trustees: Mr Nick Oakley-Smith

Name of Management Coordinator: Mr Ken Power

DCSF number: 916/6031

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

Age range of pupils and students: 3 - 19

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll: (Full time) Boys: 126 Girls: 148
(Part time) Boys: 0 Girls: 0

Number of children under 5 Boys: 4 Girls: 3

Number of post-16 students: Boys: 10 Girls: 13

Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:

Boys: 0 Girls: 1

Number of boarders: Boys: 0 Girls: 0

Annual fees: £4,703 to £6,865

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

Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley
Supporting Inspector: Mr Simon Bennett
Supporting inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell
Lay Inspector: Mrs Helen Weatherhead

Dates of inspection: 17-19th November 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. 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:

Wynstones School was founded in 1937 and is located south of Gloucester in large grounds. It was last inspected in 2007. At the time of the present inspection it had 274 pupils aged between three and nineteen, including one boarder. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and 71 others were identified by the school as having additional learning needs and/or difficulties. Ten pupils speak English as an additional language. The school's curriculum follows the Steiner Waldorf approach and is non-denominational, but Christian in its overall approach. It seeks *'to enable each child to develop and balance their spiritual, intellectual, emotional and practical qualities from Early Years onwards, ... (Wynstones) has a non-selective approach to education and believes in achieving high standards in all years without undue stress or a competitive system.'*

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	Lower school
Class 2	Year 3	Do
Class 3	Year 4	Do
Class 4	Year 5	Do
Class 5	Year 6	Do
Class 6	Year 7	Do
Class 7	Year 8	Do
Class 8	Year 9	Do
Class 9	Year 10	Upper School
Class 10	Year 11	Do
Class 11	Year 12	Do
Class 12	Year 13	Do

Summary of main findings:

The overall quality of the education provided at Wynstones School is excellent. In particular the curriculum and other activities are of high quality. The pupils are well cared for and appreciate the support that they receive from their teachers with respect to both their personal and academic development. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as is their behaviour and their relationships with each other and with the staff. Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress in their learning and the overall welfare, health and safety of pupils is also good. The school has made good progress since the last inspection.

What the school does well:

- it promotes the personal development of the pupils both as individuals and in their groups very effectively;
- it provides outstanding opportunities for artistic and creative development;
- it provides high quality and often outstanding teaching; and
- it provides outstanding breadth and quality of curriculum.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

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

The school complies with the DDA.

What the school could do to improve:

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider:

- developing a central record of the assessments made by teachers of the pupils.

B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school fulfils all the regulatory requirements in respect of the curriculum, and achieves its aim of providing a curriculum based on the principles of Steiner Waldorf education. The overall quality of the curriculum is good with outstanding features. All the required areas of learning are covered. These are primarily presented through the Main Lessons and this confirms the school's integrated approach to learning.

The timetable is planned to ensure the maintenance of the core principle of the pattern of learning through each Main Lesson and other sessions during the day. In the Upper School considerable work has gone into enabling the Main Lesson themes to work in alignment with General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects, A/S and A2 courses. The school takes great care to see that choices available at these levels reflect the needs and interests of the pupils as fully as possible, and so prepares them successfully for the next stage of their education.

Pupils have manifold opportunities to experience practical and creative subjects and there is discreet provision for information and communication technology with three areas set aside for the use of computers to facilitate research and for such things as Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) applications. Creative and aesthetic opportunities and experiences are plentiful and of the highest quality whether in music, singing, drama, eurythmy, and in the regular focus on stories, poetry and reflection. Planning is generally good, whether in the long or shorter and more immediate term, with clear focus and objectives. The school fulfils its obligations in respect to provision for a pupil with special educational needs.

The units for the Main Lessons follow those indicated in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum while teachers have room to choose content relevant to their pupils' needs. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is found across the curriculum and Main Lessons contribute powerfully to this provision. Thus Class 7's Main Lesson was physiology based and focussed on health and hygiene. PSHE is further underpinned by the ethos of the school and practical application was in evidence in a first aid session for pupils, in strong evidence of links with the local community, in the provision of traditional crafts and the importance of environmental issues which strengthen social awareness and responsibility. Throughout the school there is an emphasis on the importance of individual contributions to inclusive and collective involvement whether in daily life or through performances. Pupils have had opportunities to work with the community and have had feedback on this. Opportunities to report formally on their experiences are limited. The school provides carefully and successfully for the measured growth of numeracy and literacy, and the development of strong and confident skills of communication.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall with a number of notably strong features. The high quality of teaching and teachers' commitment overall is a key factor in the progress made by pupils. A large proportion of lessons seen throughout the school during the inspection demonstrated outstanding teaching.

Teachers plan and structure their lessons effectively and organise activities well to meet the school's aims and those of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and philosophy. The best lessons demonstrate considerable detail in planning for the short and medium term relative to the ages and abilities of the pupils and the stage of development as defined by the school and Steiner aims. They build effectively on and reinforce previous activities and experiences. They demonstrate flexibility in the teachers' responses to the developing needs of the pupils and the opportunities to extend the depth of their learning. They include detail of the specific needs of individual pupil's special learning needs and guide the provision of appropriate work or consideration. Teachers recognised the capabilities of the most able and indicated how their learning might also be extended, although this practice is not universal. Pupils with learning difficulties were observed to be well integrated into lessons and received levels of support suitable to their circumstances and the nature of the learning activity.

Lessons are typified invariably by the positive working relationships that exist between teachers and their pupils. As a result pupils usually have high expectations of what they are going to learn in a lesson. They settle quickly to learning activities and respond quickly to the teacher's requests and organisational requirements. Teachers set high expectations for what is to be achieved and the conduct of lessons, and are rarely disappointed by the pupils' responses. Good strategies for positive classroom management are employed quickly to ensure that all pupils are involved in the learning, including those few occasions when the attention of one or two individuals may waver. Because of the firm foundations built on lesson planning and the teachers' good subject knowledge and teaching expertise, learning activities usually proceed at a lively pace. In the best lessons pupils are carried along by their enjoyment of the activities and their complete involvement. For example, in a Class 6 Main Lesson based on the theme of Rome pupils were completely immersed in their activities, which included expressive class recitation of a poem. This enabled pupils to show great expression in taking on the roles of Roman characters. The pupils demonstrated good knowledge of a wide range of aspects of Roman civilisation.

Teachers in general use questioning very effectively as part of their lessons. In the best examples, for example where the range of ability in a class is quite large, it is used effectively as a means of ensuring that questions to pupils are pitched at the right level to reinforce their confidence. In other instances, for example a Class 7 English class it was used effectively to draw pupils into a range of learning activities, including group work.

Teachers demonstrate that they are well qualified and experienced. This enables them to teach with confidence and respond readily to their pupils' expectations. They use a wide range of strategies and resources to enrich the pupils' learning experiences and make learning interesting as well as challenging. Science laboratories for example provide a good learning environment which encourages pupils to experience science as a lively and stimulating subject. Teaching extends learning and presents science in a creative manner. Teachers of the wide range of artistic subjects, including art, printing, pottery, sculpture, woodwork and music of many kinds bring high levels of skill and experience to this rich aspect of pupils' creative experience. The high quality of teaching in music was exemplified during the inspection by the beauty of singing by the school choir.

Assessment is a good and developing aspect of the school. The school's framework for assessment is in line with the Steiner Waldorf philosophy and the school's own expectations. Strategies are established for ensuring that assessments of pupil's needs, attainments and aptitudes can be used to inform teachers' planning. Because teachers meet very regularly together they are able to respond quickly to individual pupils' learning needs, for example through meetings known as 'child studies' and 'class reviews'. Continuity of response to pupil's individual needs is further supported by the teachers remaining with one group through several years. Clear strategies are in place to ensure a free flow of information when pupils move into the Upper School. Appropriate tests and other assessments are undertaken by teachers in each class or subject, for example after each Main Lesson theme in many Lower School classes. Although teachers are careful to maintain individual records of pupils' progress within the different aspects of learning development, the school does not yet have a central record to support an overview of assessment, despite the strength of meetings and interaction between teachers. Marking is generally undertaken regularly, but the quality is variable. A relatively high number of pupils is identified by the school as requiring some degree of learning support. All pupils with identified special learning needs receive appropriate support in class or additionally according to need.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school fulfils all the regulatory requirements. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils in the school is outstanding and has maintained the standards reported on by Ofsted at the time of the last inspection. The pupils, boys and girls alike throughout the school, show high degrees of self-confidence but without arrogance or superficiality. Their communication with each other and with adults is of high quality and was reflected in their evident awareness of each other's space. This was shown in class, on stage, in music and in discussions and in interviews. They exhibit self-knowledge and are aware that their self esteem arises from commitment to and respect for others and from playing a full and active part in the life of the vibrant and inclusive school community. In the week of the inspection, an extensive range of cultural activities of high quality was in evidence whether in rehearsal, work in progress, or as the finished production.

Pupils enjoy these opportunities and exercise active responsibility in their development, and in the role of such bodies as the school council. They attain high standards at both an individual and a collective level. They are aware of what is expected of them in terms of behaviour, can distinguish right from wrong, contribute to the wider community and have a good knowledge of society and its institutions both in England and elsewhere.

Pupils are active in supporting concern for the environment and take pride in the quality of the food they produce. Throughout the age range of the school, care and concern for others is strongly nurtured and displayed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of welfare, health and safety policies and procedures is good, with a number of very strong features. There have been clear improvements in this aspect of the school's provision since the last inspection. Pupils say that they feel well cared for and that they can rely on the support of teachers for both their academic and their personal wellbeing. Pupils in the lower school particularly refer to the bonds developed with their class teachers with whom they remain for several years.

The school does all it can to ensure that pupils live a healthy lifestyle whilst at school. Parents are encouraged to provide healthy lunch boxes for their children and much of the food consumed is organic. The youngest pupils enjoy baking bread using healthy ingredients. Water is constantly available to pupils and they are provided with frequent opportunities for formal and informal exercise in the extensive school grounds. The grounds provide numerous opportunities for fun and boisterous games together.

The school has a full range of policies related to the pupils' welfare, health and safety, including child protection, First Aid and general health and safety matters. Policies and procedures with respect to fire precautions are appropriately delegated and diligently managed and administered. Regular fire drills are held, fire equipment is appropriately serviced and risk assessment prepared for each part of the school buildings. The school now fully complies with requirements with respect to fire evacuations. The risk assessment for the new school hall is being developed. A local fire officer visits the school on a three-yearly basis to review procedures and to point out where further improvements can be made. Good policies and procedures are now in place with regard to pupils' safety whilst on visits out of school. Appropriate records are kept with respect to fire drills and accidents.

Pupils say that there is little bullying and that the school has strategies for dealing with it when it does occur. The anti-bullying policy reflects the importance placed by the school in this respect. Teachers emphasise the sadness that can be caused by bullying; notices in Class 6 classrooms reflect this concern urging pupils not to accept it if it occurs. Good supervision with clearly specified duties by staff around the school grounds at break and lunchtimes re-enforces the school's guard against bullying. The guidelines in the school with regard to expectations for behaviour are clear and indicate the likely actions for pupils who do not adhere to the reasonable expectations for behaviour within the school community.

The school's admission and attendance registers meet the requirements. However, following completion of the attendance registers by class teachers each day, no central check is made each day by the school office in order to verify pupils' absences. Authorised and unauthorised absences in the last academic year were surprisingly high. The school fulfils the requirement to have a policy meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, with a plan that sets out how access to the school buildings is being constantly improved.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school fully meets the requirements for registration. There are good procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children prior to their appointment. For the first time, the school recently recruited a supply teacher and obtained confirmation that appropriate checks had been made. The single central record of staff, trustees, volunteers and others working at the school is well maintained and held electronically.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school has addressed the issues which were raised in the last report in relation to the premises and now fully meets the requirements. The accommodation includes the original farmhouse and a range of other buildings, both purpose built and converted from farm buildings. Most recently, in 2007, funds have been raised for a new movement hall built by the parents, pupils and friends of the school. This has been a major initiative on the part of the school community and is nearing completion. It significantly enhances the school's facilities and provides not only provision for games and physical education, but also for drama presentations, concerts and other events. The school grounds and other facilities make a major contribution to the opportunities available for learning. The quality of caretaking is high.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents

The overall provision of information is good. Since the last inspection, details of provision made for pupils for whom English is an additional language and for those with a statement of special education need are available for parents in the school's reception area. Annual reviews for the statemented pupil are clear and records of pupil progress are thorough. All information is available to the appropriate authority.

A School Directory and Parents' Handbook contains useful reference material for the school community. The School Prospectus provides insight and detail of the ethos and aims of the school. Letters are sent home informing parents of festivals. Current and forthcoming events as well as news are communicated through the Weekly Newsletter. Once a term, a notice in this newsletter reminds parents that statutory policies are available in reception. The school website has the Admissions Policy, Safeguarding Policy and publishes examination results.

Annual reports are sent to parents. In the Upper School a Main Lesson report is sent at the end of each Main Lesson. The best of these include a summary of what has been taught and learnt, a clear indication of progress made and next steps for development. Academic progress, personal and social development are noted. Parents' evenings provide a useful forum to learn about the curriculum and discuss individual pupil progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The policy and procedures meet requirements. There have been no formal complaints in the past year.

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

Wynstones is a school deeply committed to maintaining the spiritual integrity of Steiner Waldorf education. This is seen in its care of the pupils, community relationships, celebration of the festivals, the school environment, teaching and organisation.

The College of Teachers is dedicated to working out of Rudolf Steiner's ideals of republican self-management. The Chair of College and the College Management Co-ordinator (CMC) are both practising teachers who also exercise a management role. They could be described as servant leaders of the school. The mandate of the Chair of College has recently been reviewed. It now principally involves facilitating College meetings and being a focus for communication with parents and the wider community. This work is carried out well and with commitment. The current chair is highly regarded by her colleagues. The job description of the CMC is extensive but, in summary, his role is to assist the work of the Chair, support the workings of College and maintain an overview of the school. The Chair of College and the CMC have complementary styles and skills which make for a very strong and effective working partnership. They have excellent administrative support.

The work of the College is two-fold. Firstly, there is a pedagogical meeting for all teachers which focuses on the consideration of child development, the study of individual pupils and the sharing of classroom practice. This is, in effect, ongoing teacher training. Secondly, there is a meeting attended by fourteen experienced teachers where organisational decisions are made and policies formed. Out of this meeting, the tasks of running the school are allocated and mandated.

A current proposal is to review the present rather cumbersome mandate system. This seeks to assign short term finite tasks to identified mandate holders. Also some teachers are to be given longer term tasks, such as staffing matters, which will be included in their job descriptions along with timetabled opportunities to carry out that work.

Another subject for review is the Code of Practice of the Steiner Waldorf Schools' Fellowship (SWSF). The College is taking part in the SWSF's consultation process. The school aspires to work to the "good practice" level of the Code.

The College is efficiently and effectively supported by the Council. This body is made up of ten members or trustees: seven are parents, three are independent. Two College members attend Council meetings in an ex-officio capacity.

The Council is very well organised and managed. They meet ten times a year, are supplied with induction information when elected, have job descriptions and individuals take on responsibility to support and oversee key areas of school life and organisation. They have been involved in the production and follow-through of the comprehensive school development plan. While maintaining ultimate accountability for legal and financial matters, they delegate all pedagogical decisions and general organisational responsibility to the College of Teachers.

The partnership between the Council and the College is harmonious. Council members visit College on a rotational basis and teachers are invited to attend Council meetings. The sharing of the professional skills of Council with College has been highly beneficial. As a result a system establishing personal professional profiles for each member of staff has been created. Performance appraisal, peer mentoring and self-evaluation are developing more rigorously.

Parental involvement at Wynstones is significant not only at Council level. Parents spearheaded the campaign for EYFS exemption which has served as a model for other schools in the movement. Parental consultation in the last year resulted in Upper school curriculum development. Parent, pupil and teacher partnership was crowned this year with the opening of a fine new hall.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

Yes.

To improve the organisation and management of the school, the College might consider how to:

- further develop rigorous teacher appraisal;
- continue to strengthen pupil assessment and recording of progress; and
- ensure that the new sustainable model of organisation becomes embedded in the life of the school.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

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

The Kindergarten has two classes each registered for a maximum of eighteen children aged between three and six years. At the time of the inspection, one had eighteen and the other seventeen children; of these, 28 children were aged under six. Overall the Kindergarten meets the needs of the children effectively. There is a strong and effective emphasis on employing the rhythm of the day, week and year to ensure that the children feel safe and secure. A most significant aspect of the provision is the support given to encourage children across the three-year age range to play together, enabling the younger ones to learn from the social skills of the older ones and to begin to apply this to their relationships with others of the same age. The Kindergarten has received exemption from some programmes within the Early Years Foundation Stage and modifications to others. As it is in the process of reapplying for other exemptions and modifications, it is planning for and gathering information on the children's learning according to the Steiner Waldorf curriculum pending the outcome of that reapplication. The assessments made by staff are useful and provide a good basis for commenting on the children's progress during and when they leave the Kindergarten.

The leadership and management of the EYFS is good overall with some outstanding features. Partnerships with parents and carers and the Kindergarten's engagement with them are outstanding. Parents commented extremely positively about the high regard which they have for the Kindergarten staff and their work, having chosen Wynstones for its approach to early years education. They have a detailed awareness of the workings and purposes of the provision and continue to fully support the application to disapply and modify the EYFS. Home visits by the Kindergarten staff enhance their knowledge of the children. Parents help to maintain the vegetable garden whose produce is used to make soups and other snacks which the children greatly enjoy – older pupils commented enthusiastically on their memories of this. The leadership of the EYFS successfully promotes improvement and deploys the good resources effectively to encourage the children's learning. Equality and diversity are promoted effectively. Safeguarding children's welfare and safety is good. Although the Kindergarten classes do not go on outings outside the school grounds, particularly good use is made of the large Kindergarten play area and also the children are able to have supervised access to other parts of the school's extensive grounds. Self evaluation by the staff is good.

The quality of the provision in the EYFS is good with several outstanding features. Staff support the children's developing self confidence, creativity and social skills extremely well both indoors and outside. They provide good models for the children using example and imitation to encourage their development. In some instances this could be extended further by developing the good range of tools and materials so that tasks, especially outdoors can be approached in a variety of ways, as where children wished to sweep areas using a variety of brushes or to move objects.

The outcomes for children in the EYFS are outstanding within the context of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. In particular, they enjoy their learning, they feel safe and are well aware of healthy lifestyles. Children make a good contribution to the Kindergarten: they are able to set out and tidy away materials and equipment and to

support, look after and care for one another. They develop good skills for the future, especially in their social skills and their attitudes towards developing new ideas.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

Yes.

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