

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship

ADVICE TO THE DfE FOLLOWING A REQUESTED VISIT TO A STEINER ASSOCIATED SCHOOL IN ENGLAND

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of the school:	Ringwood Waldorf School
Address of the school:	Folly Farm Lane Ashley Ringwood Hampshire BH24 2NN
Telephone number:	01425 472664
Email address:	mail@ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk
Proprietor:	The Sheiling Trust
Chair of the College of Teachers:	Ms Louise Tiley
Chair of the Trustees:	Mr Rob Jukes
Administrator:	Mr Nigel Revill
School DfE number:	835/6022
Age range and gender of pupils:	3 to 16; male and female
Number on roll (Full-time) Total: 222	Boys: 121 Girls: 101
(Part-time) Total: 22	Boys: 12 Girls: 10
Number of pupils with statement of special educational need:	Boys: 0 Girls: 0
Date of visit:	21 June 2013
Reporting inspector:	Mrs Elisabeth Linley

CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL AND INSPECTION

The Ringwood Waldorf School is situated just outside the town of Ringwood in Hampshire. It opened on its current site in 1974 with six pupils. Since then the purpose-built accommodation has been developed to meet the growing number of those attending. The school now has 244 pupils, of whom 222 are full-time and 22 attend part-time in the Kindergarten. No pupil has a formal statement of special educational needs.

The Ringwood Waldorf School is unusual among British Steiner schools because of its two-tier governance structure. The Council of the Sheiling Trust carries legal responsibility for its four activities, of which the school is one. The Sheiling Trust delegates to the school's Council tasks of governance. At the time of the school's last inspection (28 February to 1 March 2012) it was suggested that the school might wish to consider, as a point for development, the need to clarify roles and responsibilities in relation to governance. The school is managed by the College of Teachers, whose members include the administrator, the bursar and a minimum of seven experienced teachers.

This unannounced emergency visit was carried out by the School Inspection Service at the request of the Department for Education (DfE).

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

The inspection was conducted by one independent professional inspector. The purpose of the visit was to look at standards on safeguarding (under parts 3 and 4).

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

Telephone conversations with the local authority's LADO (local authority designated officer) took place prior to the emergency visit being made. During the visit, a range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's website; policies concerning safeguarding and staffing; the complaints policy and procedures; the parents' handbook; the single central record; a selection of staff files; systems for record keeping; and information relating to child protection training. Meetings were held with the school's safeguarding officer (designated safeguarding person), the administrator and a trustee from the school's Council. The inspector also talked informally to pupils (aged eleven and twelve) during a handwork lesson.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Procedures for safeguarding are at present insufficiently robust. This is because standards 7(a) and 7 (b) under part 3, about the welfare, health and safety of pupils at the school, are not met.

The safeguarding policy is appropriate in most respects. However, the section on what to do in the event of an allegation being made against a teacher or other member of staff is not strong enough. It does not make clear the need to contact the LADO immediately in the event of an allegation being made, nor does it reflect the latest DfE guidance. It should be noted that the policy was reviewed in May 2013

and was last reviewed in 2011. The safeguarding policy mentions that the work of the safeguarding officer (DSP) and school will be overseen by a member of the Council. It would appear, however, as confirmed by the administrator, that the member of the Council who has this responsibility is the DSP. The school acknowledged that this is not an appropriate way to monitor and evaluate the school's provision for safeguarding and that more should be done in this respect in terms of the work of the trustees and governance. In respect of child protection (CP) training, the school is clear when the DSP and deputy DSP attended training which was delivered by the local authority. Some staff have completed CP training at other schools, prior to their current employment. Current training for all staff members other than the DSP or deputy DSP is carried out by way of briefings and updates led by the DSP at staff meetings. There is no recorded overview of any training completed (prior to or since appointment) which would help the school to ensure that staff training is not only appropriate but maintained in a timely manner.

The action taken when dealing with an allegation has not fully complied with requirements in terms of the timeliness of the action taken. During the monitoring visit, a discussion took place about the latest DfE guidance, *'Dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other staff'*, for local authorities, headteachers, school staff, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools; however, the school had not yet read this document.

Within the school's safeguarding policy on what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff, the reader is advised to refer to the school's staff disciplinary policy. This policy is currently weak and makes no reference to the possibility of a disciplinary hearing being carried out.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All the required checks have been completed to ensure that staff, volunteers and trustees are suitable to work with children. As a result, all standards under part 4 are met.

The quality of information provided to parents and carers

The school does not meet standards 24(1)(a) and 24(1)(c) under part 6.

The safeguarding policy is made available to parents but is not available to download from the school's website, nor is it made specifically clear on the website that the safeguarding policy is available from the school upon request. The handbook for parents is available to download, and within this document there is a brief paragraph on safeguarding which states that the school has a policy and a safeguarding officer. It would appear that it had been the school's intention for the policy to be available to download, but the trustee responsible for this action had not been able to complete the task. The school is currently in the process of developing a new school website and intends to ensure that the safeguarding policy is made available for parents to download.

Effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The complaints policy and procedure meet statutory requirements.

INSPECTOR'S SUMMARY AND RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED

Procedures for safeguarding are at present insufficiently robust. This is because standards 7(a) and 7(b) under part 3, about the welfare, health and safety of pupils at the school, and standards 24(1)(a) and 24(1)(c) under part 6, about the quality of information provided to parents and carers, are not met. All regulations under part 4, relating to the suitability of the proprietor and staff, are met.

Re standard 7(a)

The school does not maintain a record of the staff's child protection training and so it is not monitored robustly to ensure that training is appropriate and renewed in a timely manner. The school recognised the need to provide greater rigour in this respect and discussed the possibility of on-line training for the staff which is currently accessed by other Steiner schools or by using support provided by the local authority.

Re standard 7(b)

The monitoring of the school's safeguarding provision, as stated within the policy, is inappropriate. The section on what to do in the event of an allegation against a member of staff lacks clarity and does not have due regard to recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Furthermore, the recent action taken when dealing with an allegation has not fully complied with requirements in line with the latest DfE guidance.

Re standards 24(1)(a) and 24(1)(c)

The school's safeguarding policy is not accessible for parents from its website, nor is it made clear that it will be made available upon request. The school assured the Reporting Inspector that this will be changed in the near future, when a new website will be up and running.

ADVICE TO DfE

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the school is given until late November 2013 to ensure that the policy and procedures for safeguarding are updated, implemented, monitored and evaluated with rigour.

NOTES FOR FUTURE VISITS

Future visits should ensure that procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's policy and provision for safeguarding are rigorous: the work of the DSP and the school is being monitored and evaluated effectively by a group of people/person other than the DSP, with evidence being retained as to when and how this has been completed; CP training is completed by all staff in a timely manner and in line with requirements; a training record for all staff, in relation to child protection, is compiled; the safeguarding policy is reviewed and updated annually to reflect DfE guidance, particularly in relation to dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other staff; the safeguarding policy is made readily available for parents; the links established with the LADO on 29 April 2013 are further developed.