

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, and those schools belonging to the Cognita Group which are not members of the Independent Schools Council and its constituent associations

INSPECTION REPORT

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

Name of school:	York Steiner School
DfE number:	816/6008
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Peter Jones Supporting Inspectors: Jane Cooper Elisabeth Linley Lay Inspector: Helen Weatherhead
Dates of inspection:	25 - 27 February 2013

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: York Steiner School

Address of school: Danesmead
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York
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Email address (main): maurice@yorksteinerschool.org
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Proprietor: Council of Management of York Steiner School

Name of Chair of the Education Mandate: Vivienne Morpeth

Name of Chair of the Trustees: Oliver Garside

Name of Administrator: Maurice Dobie

DfE number: 816/6008

Type of school: Independent school associated with the Steiner Fellowship

Age range of pupils and students: 3 -14

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll: (Full-time) Boys: 62 Girls: 63
(Part-time) over 5 Boys: 13 Girls: 11

Number of children under 5: (all part-time) Boys: 16 Girls: 24

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

Annual fees: Contribution from nil to unlimited

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

Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector: Peter Jones

Supporting Inspectors: Jane Cooper
Elisabeth Linley

Lay Inspector: Helen Weatherhead

Dates of inspection: 25 - 27 February 2013

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. The lay inspector's 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:

York Steiner School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils between three and fourteen years of age. The school was established in 1980 and is located in a former local authority secondary school at Fulford Cross in York. It is governed by a board of trustees. The school follows the Waldorf curriculum based on the approach of Rudolf Steiner to child development. Admission to the school is non-selective. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting is divided into a Nursery for children aged three to four years, and three Kindergarten classes for children who are four, five or six years of age. The school has recently been granted exemption by the Secretary of State from the formal teaching of literacy which forms part of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. This part was excluded from the inspection. Some modifications to the EYFS learning and development requirements were also granted and these were taken note of during the inspection. The school allows twenty-four pupils aged between five and six to attend part time, and the parents of these pupils have signed a home-school agreement stating that they understand that they have the responsibility for ensuring that their children receive a suitable education. At the time of the inspection there were 125 full-time pupils on roll. Twenty-seven pupils are identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and there are thirteen pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The aim of the school is to nurture all the faculties of the child: artistic, practical and intellectual, as complementary aspects of a spiritual whole.

Summary of main findings:

York Steiner School provides a good quality of education which generally meets the school's aims. The school successfully promotes a positive, encouraging approach to learning and children feel safe and well cared for. The planned curriculum and activities meet for the most part the needs and interests of the pupils and enable them to make good progress, although the curriculum is more interesting and effective when pupils' knowledge is extended through challenging teaching. Teaching is good overall with a small proportion of excellent teaching, where pupils thrive and show a keen interest in learning, and some weaker teaching and less accurate assessment which is reflected in poorer responses and behaviour by pupils. The great majority of pupils are articulate and develop good listening skills; this has its roots in the EYFS, where children make a very good start in the development of these skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

is good and in keeping with the school's aims, reflecting harmonious relationships between pupils, staff and parents. Pastoral care and safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are good. Pupils generally enjoy school and the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were supportive of the school and the education it provides for their children.

What the school does well:

- this is a school where pupils, staff and parents work together to create an educational community which truly reflects the Steiner ethos; and
- pupils' personal and cultural development is promoted through creative, aesthetic and practical work, providing a good foundation for adult life.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

- provide suitable changing accommodation and showers for pupils aged eleven years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education; and
- provide accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.

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

- where a child attends more than one setting, ensure that records are shared between the settings.

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

The school complies fully with the Act.

Next Steps:

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

- ensure that the management of pupils' behaviour is fully effective throughout the school; and
- ensure that teaching and assessment consistently challenge and support all pupils to make the most of their potential for learning.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is of good quality and meets the school's aim to nurture the artistic, practical and intellectual faculties of its pupils. It allows pupils to learn well and make good progress, maintaining the good quality curriculum from the time of the previous inspection. The curriculum for pupils below compulsory school age is of good quality and appropriate to their learning needs.

From Years 2 to 9 pupils follow in full the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. This provides linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social experience in the well-established main lesson, almost always taught by the class teacher each morning in Steiner schools, through lessons which cover English, mathematics, science, geography and history. Themes and topics are well prepared and resourced, and allow pupils to learn effectively, and by Year 8 independent learning is well developed. Additional linguistic experience is provided very effectively through lessons in French and German. Technological experience is well covered through the design and making of garments in handcraft and the making of toys and musical instruments in woodworking. Following Steiner methodology, the school makes a conscious decision not to introduce information and communication technology (ICT) into the curriculum until Class 7 and 8. Physical education (PE) and games lessons, Eurythmy and hand-eye co-ordination work including juggling provide a good and purposeful range of physical experience. The school's provision for aesthetic and creative development is excellent and pupils all learn to recite poetry, sing, play an instrument, movement and act in class plays. Their learning in art includes well-taught drawing and painting methods in pencil, pastel and paint, and expressive techniques such as colourwash and perspective. The pupils' knowledge of the work of artists is securely developed through work on, for example, the Renaissance period.

The subject matter of the curriculum is generally appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of the pupils. The quality of the curriculum is enhanced where teaching shows good and confident subject knowledge and provides vibrant interpretations of the Steiner curriculum. The curriculum is less effective where teaching depends too much on specified content and does not do enough to bring content to life through interesting activities and clearly defined learning objectives to meet the differing needs and abilities of pupils.

Provision for literacy and numeracy is good, with sufficient time and appropriate content to help pupils make good progress in reading, writing and number work. The curriculum is effective in enabling pupils to acquire skills in speaking and listening. The best teaching extends the scope of the curriculum through excellent opportunities for speaking and listening through class discussion and well-managed questioning. Given the opportunity within the curriculum, pupils speak well and confidently, and apply good thinking skills. Pupils become adept at listening to their teachers and to each other, particularly in the older classes where in many subjects they are able to debate ideas fluently.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is successfully provided through the curriculum, with an emphasis on personal development and social awareness, rather than through discrete PSHE lessons. The well-structured main lesson, with its emphasis on calm, ordered activity, the broad social and moral themes of the Steiner curriculum, the emphasis on making and sustainable production, physical activity and body coordination exercises, assemblies and religion lessons, all help to promote good personal development. This meets the school's aims to nurture all the faculties of the child.

The curriculum gives pupils suitable opportunities to take responsibility, for example through the organisation of their classrooms and as mentors, although older pupils say they would like to have the chance to organise and run more clubs and activities, and inspectors support them in this. Older pupils are given suitable preparation for moving to their next school.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of the teaching and assessment is good overall, meeting the school's aims and maintaining the quality seen at the last inspection. A small proportion of the teaching is excellent, much of it is good, but some teaching is just sound, and there is a small proportion of weak teaching. Main lessons follow the Steiner approach to learning and reflect the common pattern of rhythm; introduction; recall; practice and review. This helps pupils to establish good learning habits, embed prior learning and acquire new skills. Transitions between each part of the lesson are seamless, giving shape and meaning to the whole; and teachers employ Steiner Waldorf principles and techniques effectively in their planning of activities and the teaching of lessons. Repetition helps to build strong recall of tables and understanding of numerical concepts. Practical resources are used effectively to facilitate understanding. Strong emphasis from the Kindergarten onwards is given to developing good listening and speaking skills, so that pupils become increasingly confident and articulate as they move through the school. Some of the older pupils are able to sustain a logical and coherent argument; almost all pupils express their views convincingly. Memorising stories and poetry enables pupils to build up a treasury of literature on which the foundations of reading and a love of words are built.

Most individual lessons are well planned. They draw well on detailed weekly plans and the Steiner curriculum, so that planning for pupils to learn and make progress is easily discernible. The best examples of teachers' planning include differentiated activities designed to stretch or support pupils according to their abilities, but this varies between teachers and is an area where the most effective methods are not shared more widely to help pupils of higher, and particularly lower ability make more progress. Much of the teaching reflects the middle range of the class and this does not challenge or extend the more able pupils, who are capable of more. However, teachers set a variety of open-ended tasks, including through their use of project work, which present pupils with a good level of challenge and encourage them to show initiative and creativity, and develop independence. This produces some lively, imaginative and well-researched extended writing on a range of themes with some beautifully presented illustrations.

Relationships between teachers and pupils and among the pupils themselves are strong. As a result, pupils generally feel unique and valued and that their contribution to the class is appreciated. They understand the expectations to care for each other and to work hard towards the common good. Teachers plan good

partner and group work activities as a strategy for enabling pupils to help one another and develop good team-working skills. This was particularly noticeable in a PE lesson where pupils co-operated effectively employing tactical knowledge astutely in order for their side to win.

Most classes enjoy a calm and orderly start to the lesson and are conducted in an atmosphere of shared enjoyment in learning. However, in some of the younger classes there are boisterous elements, which are not always well managed. Where teachers' skills in managing pupils' behaviour are strong, teachers respond calmly to bring everyone back to the centre. Sounds and light are used to focus mood and concentration, and a variety of teaching strategies and tasks are used to ensure that all pupils are fully involved. However, where teachers have ineffective strategies for managing poor behaviour, it has a negative impact both on the atmosphere and on the progress that all pupils are allowed to make.

Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, offer clear explanations and encourage pupils to improve the quality of their work and its presentation. Specialist teachers, for example for modern foreign languages, use their expertise well and provide a high level of challenge which fosters high standards of comprehension and pronunciation. A French lesson for Class 2 pupils, conducted entirely in the target language, was brisk and extremely challenging, demonstrating that pupils of all abilities could achieve well and have fun at the same time. A few lessons lack challenge by underestimating pupils' abilities, which leads to poor behaviour or inadequate progress where pupils are passive, under-stimulated and unenthusiastic.

The teachers know the pupils well. There is a range of opportunities for assessment which includes simple class tests, standardised tests and assessments at the end of a project or topic. Some teachers mark work more frequently and in greater detail than others, and offer helpful suggestions for improvement which are picked up in lesson plans, and this practice, again, should be shared more widely. Teachers keep appropriate records of assessment and know the pupils who need support. However, individual education plans vary in their content and usefulness. Some of those for the least able pupils do not contain the level of detail required to ensure that everyone involved with supporting these pupils is fully aware of how best to help their learning.

The school's resources for learning are of generally good quality and support the curriculum appropriately, including reflecting the distinctive Steiner ethos. There are suitable resources for the development of literacy and numeracy and a good range of materials for art and handcraft. The school library has augmented its collection of fiction since the last inspection to attract wider reading and some class teachers have additional stock in classrooms. Nonetheless, the school library is not well used for project research and pupils tend to use their own home computers for this purpose since ICT resources in the school are limited. Some displays of pupils' work are beautifully presented and provide a good selection including drawings, mathematical diagrams, explanations of scientific processes, figures from history and geographical details, summarising project work. Of particular note is the art work 'Homage to starry night' where pupils demonstrated individual interpretations after the style of Van Gogh.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, reflecting the school's aims. This aspect is no longer outstanding as it was in the previous inspection report because there is undue variation in the way in which poor behaviour is managed and in the limitations of the 'student voice' in the running of the school.

Pupils are independent and confident, have a good self-awareness and show concern for others. In general, they enjoy their education, make good friends and value each other's individual strengths and contributions. The Waldorf approach to education engaging the pupils in 'head, heart and hands' greatly strengthens the pupils' sense of their own spirituality and helps them find their unique place in the world. Pupils are highly valued by their teachers who find something to praise in everyone, and this helps to build confidence and self-esteem. Through the strong emphasis on the oral tradition and the many opportunities for public speaking in drama, festivals and verse speaking, pupils develop confidence and learn to articulate their views. Some of the pupils told inspectors that they would appreciate more opportunities for their voice to be heard, for whilst some Class 8 pupils have been members of the York Youth Council, there is no forum in school such as a school council where pupils can discuss their suggestions and take responsibility for developing the life of the school.

Pupils have good opportunities to develop good moral values. Teachers strongly model and positively reinforce kindness and good moral values. Good work on biographies in the upper school challenges pupils to research the life of a public person and helps pupils to understand which values earn respect and how they can choose to lead their own lives. In their lessons and circle time, pupils learn right from wrong and gain respect both for the law of the country and for the simple rules of living in the school community. The pupils develop an increasing awareness of what is appropriate behaviour, and learn respect for one another and for the environment. Although pupils' behaviour is generally good, around a third of the secondary pupils who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed concern that instances of poor behaviour were not well managed and this was substantiated in a small number of lessons seen.

The school helps pupils develop good social skills. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their class community through age-appropriate tasks, for example keeping their classrooms clean and tidy, watering flowers and looking after pets. Older pupils are encouraged to look after younger ones, but there are few opportunities for older pupils to take on leadership roles in the school. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community by contributing time and energy to producing and selling goods and produce for the annual spring and advent school fairs. These raise funds for the school community and entertain local children with puppet shows and story-telling. The harvest festival provides an opportunity to help the homeless and those in need, and the annual sponsored walk/cycle ride to raise money for Waldorf schools and projects in less advantaged countries heightens pupils' awareness of the needs of others and how they can contribute to wider society.

Provision for pupils' cultural development is excellent. Pupils are suitably prepared for life in multicultural society through project work, topics in main lesson and work in religious education. Their studies are enlivened through class trips to local places of worship such as a mosque, Hindu and Sikh temples and by a visit to Carmelite

community. All pupils learn to respect one another's differences and to be patient and kind. Very good cultural awareness comes from the wide range of topic work and trips, and is reinforced by learning modern foreign languages from an early age. These studies foster cross-cultural understanding. An excellent lesson in German about the Berlin airlift helped Class 8 pupils to develop empathy and a good understanding of how people feel when their freedom is threatened by an occupying force. The appreciation of other cultures is reinforced strongly through many class visits to places of cultural interest, such as museums and galleries, and by overseas residential experience, for example in Germany, Italy and Turkey.

The curriculum is regularly discussed by the education mandate group of teachers and this precludes pupils' exposure to politically biased viewpoints. They learn about the formation of political systems, beginning with lessons in Roman history, and ideas of revolution and democracy are discussed in history. They have good awareness of public institutions and services such as libraries and galleries, and the road system, through cycling proficiency. They have all learned practical skills: through woodwork; knitting and sewing; cooking and gardening, which help them understand their connection with the environment. Class 8 pupils have practical lessons in preparing meals, entertaining others, budgeting and menu planning through running the school café and this prepares them well for later life. The building is let to various groups after school hours, and trustees ensure that pupils are appropriately safeguarded.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of welfare, health and safety in the school is good and has improved since the last inspection. Pastoral care is a real strength, reflecting the arrangement whereby as far as possible pupils stay with the same class teacher throughout their time at the school. Teachers know their pupils very well, and develop a secure understanding of their emotional, physical and academic progress. Pupils feel able to share problems with their teachers. Good records of pupils' progress are retained and used effectively to support pastoral care provision.

The school makes appropriate arrangements to safeguard pupils and promote their welfare, and all staff receive relevant and up-to-date training. The school has an anti-bullying policy and pupils say that bullying is not a problem. Instances of very poor behaviour are dealt with well. The school has appropriate health and safety, fire risk and first aid policies documented and these are implemented correctly. Pupils feel safe in school. Supervision of pupils around the school is generally good. In a small number of lessons for younger pupils in the main school teaching is not firm enough in putting a stop to minor disruption. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the regulations.

The school enables pupils to be healthy through its good provision for PE, in science and through cookery lessons, where healthy options are emphasised.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

When appointments are made the correct procedures are followed and appropriate checks are carried out to ensure suitability. The single central register meets requirements in full.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is located in a purpose-built secondary school building, which was previously owned by the local authority. A small part of one wing is let to private business which provides additional income for the school. This area has its own entrance and is separated from the school and its grounds so that there is no access to the pupils.

The classrooms are adequate in size for the numbers of pupils on roll, and there are specialist areas where science, woodwork, craftwork, Eurythmy and PE are taught. There is a school library and a café where older pupils learn to prepare and serve food. There are also some attractive areas such as the shop and Parent & Child room which are well used for community activities. A lift gives wheelchair users access to the first floor. The dedicated medical room is suitably furnished and equipped. Its location enables staff to check on a sick pupil regularly, but the room itself is at too great a distance from the nearest lavatory. There is suitable washroom provision for pupils and separate facilities for staff. Changing facilities are adequate but there are no showers for older pupils to use after physical exercise. Pupils have access to drinking water whenever they want.

Outside, there is a good space to play which has been provided with outdoor equipment that stimulates children's imagination and physical development. The Kindergarten children have their own secure outdoor area. There is also an off-site playing field. The building and grounds are maintained appropriately, but some communal areas need refreshing in order to encourage pupils to take more pride in their environment.

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 comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools' Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide suitable changing accommodation and showers for pupils aged eleven years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23A(1)(c)); and
- provide accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility (paragraph 23B(1)(b)).

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The quality of information is good. New parents are given a handbook: either for the EYFS or the general school handbook. They are also given a community list with details of relevant contacts for communication. In addition a parental involvement leaflet is available. Parental involvement meetings are arranged in the cafe to help welcome new families into the community and explain how the school works. A fortnightly newsletter is very helpful in keeping parents notified about current school news and forthcoming events.

The school website is particularly good. It is clear, colourful, easy to navigate and has a wealth of information including a history of the school and its philosophy, the curriculum, school structure and management. Key policies such as admissions, safeguarding and complaints are also included.

Each class has a parent class representative who acts as a channel for communication between parents and teachers. Parents' evenings are held termly. There are class evenings where the stages of child development and the related curriculum, and the general progress of the class are outlined. There is an additional opportunity for parents to have individual meetings with the teacher where their child's progress can be discussed. The end of year report contains both class and subject teachers' reviews. The best of these include a brief resume of what has been taught with more detailed information on what the child has achieved and an indication of the next steps in learning.

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaires were supportive of the school and the education their children were receiving. One parent wrote, *'we wish to acknowledge the quality of the Steiner ethos – a concern for each child's individuality, an active encouragement of the child's unique development (intellectual, moral, social and physical), and an emphasis also on his or her self-responsibility and duty to the community.'*

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school's policy and procedure comply fully with regulatory requirements. There was one complaint within the last twelve months. The procedure for dealing with this complaint was followed meticulously.

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

York Steiner School is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. The School Association is open to all parents, teachers and support staff. It meets termly and reviews the overall vision and development of the school. The board of trustees is elected by the Association and is legally and financially responsible for the school. It meets twice a term, once on its own and once jointly with the School Management Group (SMG). The SMG is an executive group made up of parents, teachers, the bursar, the Administrator and a trustee. It is the policy-making body of the school and meets fortnightly.

To its credit, the school continues to pursue its policy of financial inclusion with every family making a financial contribution. A fundraising mandate has newly been formed. Parental involvement is high and parents show commitment to the school in many and varied ways, from fundraising to helping with maintenance. A recent initiative has tasked the parent bodies of individual classes to undertake improvements around the school so as to transform the premises, especially in the communal areas. This could create a more beautiful and sympathetic environment in which the children can grow and learn. It is also good that there is now strategic planning both to increase Kindergarten and child care provision and also to create an upper school.

The structure of the organisation and management of the school was in a period of transition at the time of the last inspection. Since then it has improved significantly with all the recommendations suggested at that time having been implemented. In terms of management structure, the school is now on a positive and stable course. A mandate system has been established which includes the key areas of education, estates, finance, human resources (HR) and public relations. The mandate holders are part of the SMG. All teachers now share responsibility for maintaining the pedagogical ethos of the school.

The education and HR mandates, along with the Administrator, have established a system of in-house mentoring, visiting advisors and a team of external appraisers. The appraisers visit each teacher on an annual basis, receiving self-evaluation reviews from the teachers before their classroom visits. Feedback is discussed individually, goes to the education mandate holder and is then collated by the Administrator. Having this overview enables appropriate continuous professional development for teachers and can also inform the content of in-service training days. In the last year, every teacher has had the opportunity to go on training days.

The ethos of the school continues to be maintained effectively through the in-depth understanding the teachers have of the children; the curriculum; the festivals; and the rhythm of school life.

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:

- further analyse the teachers' evaluations so that more defined benefits for pupils are identified;
- continue to develop communication between the EYFS, the lower school and management bodies.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall quality and standards of the early years' provision

The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good, with some outstanding features.

The school has recently been granted exemption by the Secretary of State from the formal teaching of literacy which forms part of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. This part was excluded from the inspection. Some modifications to the EYFS learning and development requirements were also granted and these were taken note of during the inspection.

The outcomes for children in the EYFS are good with some significant strengths. Children are articulate and are confident to ask questions of each other and of the adults who work with them. They develop very good listening skills. This was seen during the inspection when children in a Kindergarten class were captivated by the story that their teacher told them at the end of a busy morning. The children maintained their concentration throughout the story, an outcome clearly aided by the very good expression used by the teacher to bring the story to life. Children's skills in the creative arts are also very well developed. The staff demonstrate painting techniques when, for example, they 'stroke' the paper like stroking a cat, and the children learn to imitate and to explore, for example, how colours are blended. Children are self-reliant and respond well to the opportunities provided for them to initiate their own learning. For example, a small group of children in a Kindergarten class decided it was time for a puppet show and they collaborated very well to decide how the story of Little Red Riding Hood would be presented and which instruments were to be played. Children readily apply skills to new situations, for example, when considering the number of their house and showing how many makes two. They clearly enjoy their learning and, as a result, achieve well.

How well the early years' provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

The quality of the provision in the EYFS is good. All the classrooms provide a calm and secure atmosphere in which the children play and learn happily. Activities follow a similar rhythm to the parent and toddler groups held in school when rhymes and special songs highlight changes in the rhythm of the mornings. Planning is in place for the day, week and term and daily activities in Kindergarten reflect activities that might well take place in the home. Daily planning shows the main focus for learning, for example, 'baking' or 'painting'. It does not always provide information relating to the content of the activity and the learning that might, as a result, be achieved. However, it is clear that the staff know their children very well and a review of the day's work is carried out meticulously. The on-going assessments and recording of all the children's development are rigorous. The progress made by the older children against the early learning goals is also clearly recorded, and well-written reports for parents share good examples of their children's achievement across the areas of learning. Teaching in the EYFS is never less than good and on occasions it is outstanding. Clear strengths of teaching are the way in which children are engaged in conversation and encouraged to listen to each other with real interest. This was seen when children ate their snack of bread they had helped to make earlier in the morning. This social occasion, enjoyed by children and staff alike, was

complemented by the glow of candle light, again seen during story time when a similarly calm atmosphere was created. The very good relationships that are formed, and the consistent approach by staff to promote the children's good behaviour, underpin the children's developing self-confidence and their very positive attitudes to learning and to others.

The contribution of the early years' provision to children's well-being

The contribution of the early years' provision to children's well-being is good. A range of policies, procedures and effective risk assessments for learning activities, the indoor and outdoor environments and for visits out of school are in place. This action, together with the efficient completion of employment checks, ensures that the safeguarding of children's welfare is good. There is a strong focus on the promotion of equality and diversity; older children support younger children well and this promotes very good relationships. Children also develop an awareness of how to keep healthy and stay safe. For example, children are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through the daily opportunities for learning outside, where children run, jump, explore and investigate their surroundings and the outdoor equipment. They grow their own produce and make, for example, wholesome snacks and food such as nourishing soup. Such activities also develop the children's awareness of how to stay safe when from an early age, they use appropriate tools to cut, saw or thread different produce or materials. Children in Kindergarten explained very well how to use a weaving needle safely, when they were weaving during handwork. In the afternoon care, the same approach to safety is adopted through purposeful and well-organised activities and when outside, children have the opportunity to play in the secure outdoor area used only by Nursery and Kindergarten children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the early years' provision

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in the EYFS is good. The Nursery and Kindergarten staff work together well to form an effective team. They meet weekly to discuss their work and take advantage of training days when they review their practice and identify development points. As a result of recent self-evaluation, staff appraisal has been identified as an area for development and this has been programmed to begin in the summer term. The staff form good partnerships with others; for example, they hold workshops for trainee teachers and practitioners in other schools to share their expertise in the expressive arts and design. They liaise well with the leaders of the mother and toddler groups which meet every day in school. They also have plans to liaise with other settings, when children in the Nursery attend another setting during the week, so that records can be shared. Partnerships with parents are particularly strong and are reinforced by daily contact in school, home visits and parents' evenings. Parents are encouraged to be actively engaged in their child's learning and the assessment of their progress. Parents report positively on the observation notes that they can fill in and return to the teacher on a regular basis.

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 comply with the regulations?

In order to comply in full with the Independent Schools' Standards Regulations the school must:

- where a child attends more than one setting, ensure that records are shared between the settings.

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. Further copies of the report are available from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionservice.co.uk