



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Progress monitoring report

School name	Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley
DfE registration number	919/6109
Inspection dates	29-30 June 2016
Reporting inspector	Jane Cooper
Supporting inspectors	Paul Armitage, Peter Jones

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was conducted by the School Inspection Service (SIS) at the request of the Department for Education (DfE). It was carried out by SIS in accordance with Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and it follows the inspection framework agreed with the DfE.

The inspection was conducted by three independent professional inspectors, who looked at aspects of the school's provision as requested by the DfE and covered by the school's action plan in response to the Notice served by DfE.

Context of the inspection

The School Inspection Service carried out an inspection of the Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley in accordance with Section 109 (1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008 in March 2015. This inspection revealed that the school was not meeting the independent schools standards relating to the provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (Part 3 paragraphs 11 and 16 (a)); the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (Part 4 paragraphs 18 (a-c), and 21); the suitability of the premises and the accommodation (Part 5 paragraphs 24(1)(b) and 25) and the quality of leadership and management (Part 8 paragraphs 34 (a)(b) and (c)).

Following this inspection, the school produced an action plan addressing the failed standards. The DfE asked inspectors to monitor the school's progress in implementing this plan and also to examine the quality of the school's safeguarding procedures following safeguarding incidents at the school and complaints from parents. The monitoring inspection took place on 9-10 November 2015. It reported that the school did not meet the independent school standards relating to the provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (Part 3 paragraphs 7 – 7(b); and 16 (a) and (b)); the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (Part 4 paragraphs 21(3) to 21 (5) (c)); the manner in which complaints are handled (Part 7 paragraph 33); and the quality of leadership and management (Part 8 paragraphs 34(1) (b) and (c)). The school was required to produce a further action plan within a fixed timescale addressing these matters.

Following concerns raised by parents, the DfE commissioned an emergency inspection with a prescribed focus on aspects of pupils' welfare, health and safety and the leadership and management of the school. This inspection took place on 8 March 2016. It reported that the school was failing to meet paragraph 34(1)(b) of the independent school standards relating to the quality of the leadership and management of the school. On 18 March 2016 the DfE served a Notice on the school. Subsequently the Department agreed with the school that it would produce a single action plan demonstrating how all the then unmet standards would be met by 29 June 2016. This plan was evaluated on 26 April and rejected by the DfE. The plan was amended and resubmitted on 16 May. Although much improved, this plan was also rejected on the grounds that class teachers appeared to be insufficiently accountable for the quality of their work.

The DfE commissioned another inspection which took place on 29-30 June 2016. The purpose of this inspection was to report on the effectiveness of the school's actions in relation to the Notice to improve and whether the independent school standards are now met. This is the report of that inspection. It took place without prior notification to the school.

Evidence of progress in relation to the action plan

Part 3, paragraph 7: The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–

- (a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and**
- (b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.**

This standard is met. The school has now established a clear culture and understanding of safeguarding among staff and pupils which was previously absent. This has been achieved through providing additional and extensive training in safeguarding for all staff and trustees, including training in radicalisation and female genital mutilation (FGM). The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and her deputy are both members of the school management team and enjoy the support of colleagues and trustees. They, together with a number of other managers and trustees, have received higher level training in safeguarding. All staff and trustees who are responsible for the appointment of staff have undertaken the 'safe recruitment' training. Additional training has also been given in handling allegations against staff. 'Safeguarding' is now a standing item on the agenda of College, whole school staff and management meetings.

As a result of extensive and recent training, the DSL, the deputy DSL and the trustee with safeguarding responsibility are knowledgeable and able to make informed decisions. The DSL is a senior member of staff and understands the importance of her role in making decisions in the best interests of pupils. She is able to act independently of other managers and trustees when the need arises and is in close, regular contact with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). There is clear determination to advocate for children, to take tough decisions where necessary and to ensure that all recommendations based on the outcome of disciplinary hearings are fully implemented.

Teachers who were spoken to at random during the inspection all understood their individual responsibility to safeguard children. The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements. Child protection files are in good order and are kept separately from the child's school record, which the previous inspection had identified as an issue. The files demonstrate that the school handles cases in a responsible and informed manner. The staff Code of Conduct has been further strengthened and deals very clearly with the appropriate boundaries between adults and pupils. All staff have attended a specific training session on the Code of Conduct. The school has put in place additional measures including supervision and restriction of duties to ensure that pupils are safe. These measures appear to be working effectively.

Pupils are well-informed about safeguarding matters and understand how to keep themselves and others safe. Younger pupils had a good understanding of reasons to be wary of adults they did not know. Older pupils spoke competently about a wide range of issues including smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, bullying, personal and sexual health and the dangers of misusing the internet and social media. The pupils reported that they had received training in recognising grooming and touching.

Paragraph 16: The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–

- (a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and**
- (b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.**

This standard is met. Written risk assessments have been improved. They are no longer generic documents and have now been updated and made directly relevant to the school. There are arrangements for the risk assessments to be monitored by a member of the school management team but these arrangements are still new and should be reviewed for their effectiveness at the next inspection.

The risk assessment policy for school trips was reviewed and updated in May 2016 and now meets requirements. It refers to the process of planning and organisation of trips needing to be explicit and requires the involvement of a senior member of staff as the Education Visit Coordinator (EVC). It includes improved guidance on planning timescales and staff/pupil ratios which the response to the previous action plan demanded. Under the school's present circumstances, the policy might usefully provide more explicit guidance on safeguarding pupils on trips by including the text on favouritism and grooming taken from the updated staff Code of Conduct and by adding specific reference to considerations of overnight supervision and protocols about informal contact with pupils during a visit. The school has now fully implemented the 'EVOLVE' commercial scheme for conducting risk assessments of educational visits, and this is working well. Appropriate measures have also been put in place to ensure that pupils are only accompanied on trips by agreed staff. These measures were implemented appropriately in the recent round of class trips.

Part 4, paragraphs 21(3) – 21(5)(c): standards relating to the recruitment and vetting of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and the recording of checks.

These standards are met. The previous inspection identified deficiencies in the school's recruitment procedures and in the single central record of staff appointments. These have all been rectified. The single central record is now in very good order. The school operates safe recruitment procedures and all the required checks on newly appointed staff and trustees have been undertaken. Personnel files provide clear evidence of the rigorous checking procedures now implemented by the school.

Part 7, paragraph 33: Manner in which complaints are handled.

This standard is met. The school has a suitable complaints policy which it implements appropriately. Complaints are taken seriously and investigated with due

care. Two Concerns and Complaints Officers keep careful chronological records of complaints. Emails and letters are retained on file and notes are made of the sequence of events. Any child protection concerns in the complaint are identified and directed appropriately to the DSL. Inspectors recommended a slight amendment to the wording of the policy and that the school should identify and separate parental complaints from staff grievances, as these needed to be seen as separate categories: current practice is to use the same forms for both and to file them all together. However, the Complaints Officers have done a good job in administering over recent months a very high volume of complaints correspondence. The involvement of the school management team (SMT) in dealing with complaints is effective in ensuring that key points in complaints are identified quickly and prioritised so that action can be taken. However, this is not the role of SMT who need time to manage the school. The school has recognised this and plans to obtain additional help on a temporary basis to handle complaints while the volume remains high.

In the past, there were instances where complaints from parents, for example about the provision for pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs (DSEN), have been treated in a peremptory fashion. The approach seen at the school now is different. The school does listen to parents, and tries to take as much account as possible of their concerns and respond to them. However, it is clear that in some cases in the past this has been made difficult because of the intransigence of the class teachers involved. The new school management arrangements enable the school to respond more effectively to concerns. Nonetheless, inspectors looked at the progress of pupils with DSEN and concluded that there is cause for concern about the progress of some pupils in some classes in the Lower School. This is not the fault of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) or the DSEN support team which is well-organised and provides well-targeted support for pupils on a withdrawal basis with reading, spelling and writing. However, some class teachers have shown a pattern of resistance to the acknowledgement of pupils' special educational needs and a reluctance to provide support within the classroom, for example by providing differentiated work or allowing these pupils to use information technology to help them in their work. It is an outcome of weak and ineffective management in the past that these teachers have been able to run their classes without effective oversight or performance management.

Paragraph 34(1): The standard about the quality of the leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –

(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently, and

(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The standard is met. The school has put in place a new management system, but further monitoring is required to check the impact of the new system and to ensure that the planned developments are made and that improvement is sustained so that standards are met consistently.

The Council of Trustees

The school is a Registered Charity and operates as a Limited Company. It is governed by a Council of nine Trustees all of whom are drawn from membership of the Association which supports the philosophy and teachings of Rudolf Steiner. There is an application process to become a member of the Association, and members may be co-opted or apply to become trustees of the school. There are plans to recruit more members to the Association so that there is a larger pool from which to recruit trustees. Drawing trustees from the Association ensures appropriate support is maintained for the school's ethos.

There are some weaknesses in the way in which the Council of Trustees is constituted which make its governance vulnerable and in need of improvement. Under its current articles the Council of Trustees must consist of three teachers; three parents and three external members, with a two-year term of office which may be extended. The events of recent times, where the school community has been riven with factions and disagreement, have shown that a Council where the majority of trustees are drawn from staff and parents enables discord and conflicts of interest to be perpetuated. There have been a number of changes on the Council of Trustees since April with new members bringing welcome expertise in governance and management. Nevertheless, having a majority of external trustees on the Council would reduce factionalism and also bring a wider set of skills to better steer and support the school's development. Furthermore, the lines of accountability introduced under the new management arrangements will not work where teacher-trustees are holding to account the school managers who in turn hold them to account for their performance as teachers. It is inappropriate for the Chair of the Council to be a teacher at the school.

The trustees meet regularly with a clear agenda and detailed minutes. They have recently received governor training and have also been trained in safeguarding, including managing allegations against staff. The trustees have been effective in devising and introducing a new structure for their own work which is grouped into four committees covering the key areas of education; welfare and safeguarding; finance; and compliance, with clear terms of reference for each. The committees provide a clear structure for governing the school. They enable the trustees to support and guide the school and hold school managers to account for their work. It is still early days: only three of the four committees have met so far and their work needs time to develop and make a difference. However, there is already a positive impact on the organisation, direction and morale of the school.

The School Management Team (SMT)

The trustees have also created an effective structure within which the SMT can lead and manage the school. They have operated a robust and transparent process for recruiting the school management team and made thoughtful and considered appointments of key personnel to these roles. The SMT has already had a positive impact. The decision-making process is now much clearer and more manageable. Clear procedures are in place by which the SMT can report to the trustees' committees and trustees can hold school managers to account for their leadership of the school. School managers have gained the trust and support of the College by maintaining a transparent and professional relationship with them, taking on board

their views and explaining decisions to them. This has established respect for the people in key roles and built confidence in the school's ability to resolve tension and move forward. Excellent assistance throughout the recent phase of development has been given by two external consultants who have each brought valuable complementary skills and knowledge from their respective backgrounds in Steiner and maintained schools. The SMT has worked extremely hard to secure a number of improvements. Among these is a clear and transparent system by which senior staff can manage the performance of teachers. This is likely to ensure both that teachers are held accountable for the success of their work and that the school fulfils its part in ensuring professional development is well-targeted and effective. SMT is aware that the recruitment of middle managers will help to strengthen this process and they are working towards this aim. There is now a well-planned system for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, timed through the year, which is likely to increase managers' awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and identify areas for improvement. There is a school improvement plan with timescales and named staff, but it requires greater clarity and prioritisation.

Minutes from the SMT reveal that time and attention is currently divided between school improvement planning and a degree of 'fire-fighting' in the aftermath of recent events which are a legacy of casual and ineffective management in the past. This needs to change so that the SMT has the time and resources to develop and fully implement the planned programme of improvement. Due legal procedures are in process and need to be allowed to run their course. The involvement of independent external partners, such as 'Herts for Learning' (the local authority agency for human resources and training support), has been helpful in providing expert advice on legal matters in connection with disciplinary hearings and appeals, but this has taken too long. The SMT should ensure that matters of this nature are tackled more swiftly in the future. Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that recommendations are implemented and conditions adhered to, so that safeguards are in place for the protection of the pupils.

The College of Teachers

The role of the College has been clearly defined. The Co-chairs report that the members are positive about the way forward, understand their responsibilities and support fully the SMT. This creates a harmonious and purposeful climate in which to lead and manage the school. The College is aware that a strategic plan is needed to define the framework for the school's development and a trustee with expertise in this area will be working with them.

Overall: The school has put in place a workable structure for leadership and management, which is supported by staff, but it is still too new for there to be certainty about its effectiveness. Much has already been accomplished to ensure that the independent school standards are met, yet much remains to be done to sustain the improvements. Because it cannot yet be demonstrated that these arrangements will enable the standards to be met consistently, it is recommended that a watching brief is kept on the school's development, so that the impact of the new management systems and structures can be checked at the next review. There is already a general lessening of tension and a greater feeling of optimism, goodwill and achievement among the community of trustees, staff and parents which bodes well.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school now meets The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements, but the school will require close monitoring to check the effectiveness of the new leadership and management arrangements and their impact on school improvement going forward.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley			
Address of school:	Langley Hill, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire WD4 9HG			
Telephone number:	01923 262505			
Email address:	langleyc@rsskl.org			
Web address	http://rsskl.org			
Proprietor:	Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley Ltd.			
Chair of Council of Trustees	Julian Paine			
Co-chairs of College of Teachers	Steffi Cook, Christopher Triplett			
School Management Team	Tina Hobday, Carol Langley, Jenny Pooley Nicky Teensma, Regina Walsh			
DfE Number	919/6109			
Type of school	Independent school which is affiliated to the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship			
Age range of pupils	3 – 19 years			
Gender of pupils	Co-educational			
Total number on roll	full-time	301	part-time	67
	Boys:	192	Girls:	176
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	1	Girls:	2
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Type of inspection	Progress monitoring inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008			
Date of inspection	29-30 June 2016			
Inspector(s)	Jane Cooper, Paul Armitage, Peter Jones			

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, and members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship or Cognita group. The report is available from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk.