

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:	Norwich Steiner School
DfE number:	926/6154
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mrs Eileen McAndrew Supporting Inspectors: Mr Ted Cohn Mrs Anne McConway Lay Inspector: Mrs Helen Weatherhead
Dates of inspection:	20 to 23 May 2014

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Norwich Steiner School		
Address of school:	Hospital Lane Norwich NR1 2HW		
Telephone number:	01603 611175		
Email address:	info@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk		
Proprietor:	Norwich Initiative Steiner School Ltd		
Chair of the College of Teachers:	Mr Jeremy Nowell		
Chair of the Trustees:	Ms Lucy Parker		
Name of Administrator:	Ms Sandie Tolhurst		
DfE number:	926/6154		
Type of school:	Independent school associated with the Steiner Fellowship		
Age range of pupils and students:	3 to 16		
Gender of pupils:	Male and female		
Total number on roll:	(Full-time)	Boys: 37	Girls: 33
	(Part-time)	Boys: 0	Girls: 4
Number of children under 5:	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	
Number of post-16 students:	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	
Annual fees:	£3,474 to £6,140		
Type of inspection:	Section 162A of the Education Act 2002		
Inspection Team:			
	Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Eileen McAndrew	
	Supporting Inspectors:	Mr Ted Cohn Mrs Anne McConway	
	Lay Inspector:	Mrs Helen Weatherhead	
Dates of inspection:	20 to 23 May 2014		

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:

Norwich Steiner School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged three to sixteen years old. The school was established in 2005 and is situated in the Lakenham district of Norwich. The school is inspired by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner as interpreted through the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Admission is non-selective. At the time of the inspection there were seventy-nine pupils on roll of whom fourteen are in the Kindergarten. One pupil has a statement of special educational need.

Steiner class names	National Curriculum
Kindergarten	Nursery, Year R, Year 1
Class 1/2	Year 2 /3
Class 3/4	Year 4/5
Class 5/6	Year 6/7
Class 7/8	Year 8/9
Class 9/10	Year 10/11

The school was last inspected in March 2011.

Summary of main findings:

Norwich Steiner School succeeds in creating a learning community guided by the principles of Rudolf Steiner where pupils develop the attitudes and values inspired by his philosophy. The quality of education is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is good, with significant strengths. Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. As a result, pupils of all abilities make good progress. Assessment is satisfactory and improving although some aspects still need to be consistently embedded in practice. Pupils' behaviour is excellent: they are friendly, open, lively and considerate of one another. The school's policies and practice to support the safeguarding of pupils is good. Pastoral care is very good and aspects of provision for welfare, health and safety are good. Pupils say they love coming to school. They feel safe, valued as individuals and believe their teachers care deeply about them and work hard for them to succeed. The large proportion of parents who responded

to the pre-inspection questionnaire is wholeheartedly supportive of the school and of the education it provides for their children. The school meets all of the requirements.

The school has made improvements in the curriculum, assessment and in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, since the last inspection.

What the school does well:

- it ensures that pastoral care is a priority, so pupils feel known, valued as individuals, and safe and secure;
- it fosters very good relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves, based on mutual trust and respect, and
- it provides an excellent environment in which pupils can pursue their learning.

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Next Steps

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

- Improving planning to identify more specifically what pupils will learn, with particular attention to ensuring progress over time;
- refining lesson planning to identify precisely what pupils of differing abilities are expected to know and understand by the end of each lesson, and
- embedding assessment procedures more consistently across the school and increasing the use of this information to shape future planning.

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 good, with some noteworthy features. It has improved since the last inspection, but some of the weaknesses identified at that time have not yet been fully addressed.

Agreed Steiner Waldorf themes define the core provision of the curriculum, mainly taught in two hour blocks at the beginning of the school day, with topics that often last for several weeks. These are complemented by subject lessons in different areas, including specialist teaching in modern languages and increasing specialist subject provision in the Upper School. The curriculum is broad and covers all the required areas of learning, with particular strengths in aesthetic and creative experiences. This is most evident in art and music, while physical and practical skills are very well developed through learning in woodwork, clay modelling, cooking, gardening, physical education and photography. The provision for science, which was a weakness at the time of the last inspection, has improved significantly, particularly in the Upper School. The school has increased flexibility in the timetable, especially in the Upper School, so that large blocks of time across one or more weeks can be devoted to particular subjects, often taught by peripatetic specialist teachers. This has improved the quality of science and mathematics provision and allows extension of the curriculum to carry out in-depth studies. For example, in photography in Class 9/10, pupils have been making pinhole cameras and developing an understanding of the philosophical debate surrounding the making of images. Similarly, in a visit to local woodland to fell trees, Class 5/6 pupils used the wood to craft artefacts such as mallets and staffs.

The curriculum is further enriched through the learning of two foreign languages from an early age, the inclusion of economics and ethics, and the study of various world religions. The curricular experience of pupils is enhanced by a variety of educational visits, such as the two-week visit to a farm in Spain for Class 9/10. This provided a diverse and interesting range of experiences, or the visit to Norwich Castle and to the coast to study coastal erosion. Nature walks also provide a valuable part of the curriculum for younger pupils.

Medium and long-term curriculum planning has improved since last inspection. Excellent examples of learning outcomes are identified in some planning, but in other instances, planning still goes little beyond the list of topics and the content to be covered. Where this is the case, a lack of clarity about expected outcomes makes the assessment of progress more difficult and can adversely affect pupils' achievement. Similarly, formal planning for the range of ability and age of pupils in classrooms is variable, but this is mitigated somewhat, as staff do know their pupils' personal and intellectual capabilities very well, and informally address these differences well in the classroom, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Planning for assessment has improved considerably since the last inspection and informs future planning effectively in a number of subjects. The planning for the introduction of the new Steiner School Certificate in September 2014 has been careful and thorough.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned and is effectively integrated into the curriculum. The school draws on outside expertise to help with specific issues such as drugs and sex education, as well as broader aspects of healthy living, for example, the study of childbirth which is part of present provision.

Careers education guidance and work experience are closely linked to work done on economic understanding, helping pupils to understand wider considerations around the world of work. The two week visit to a Spanish farm for Class 9/10 gave pupils the opportunity to work on the land, providing valuable insights into the experience of physical work, the importance of stamina and collaboration. The emphasis on taking responsibility and the ethical understanding of what this means, becomes an increasingly explicit feature of the curriculum later in pupils' education, contributing to the beliefs and values they will take into adult life.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is almost always good and occasionally outstanding. Assessment is regular and methodical and has improved markedly since the last inspection. As a result, all pupils acquire new knowledge and skills, increase their understanding and make good progress in relation to their ability.

Teachers have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Steiner curriculum and a heartfelt appreciation of the beliefs, values and principles which underpin a Steiner education. This gives rationale and purpose to the familiar rhythms of each day's lessons and helps to ensure that all pupils experience different ways of learning. Teaching in the aesthetic, creative and physical aspects of the curriculum including art, music, photography and handwork is of a high quality, enhancing and enriching pupils' learning. In discussion, many pupils expressed their enjoyment of all aspects of games and mentioned their eager anticipation of the forthcoming Steiner Olympics. The early teaching of two modern foreign languages introduces younger pupils to the wider world of Europe and the cultural similarities and differences of two neighbouring countries. The specialist skill and expertise of peripatetic teachers, for example in science, mathematics and photography add significant strength to the curriculum and to the quality of teaching.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, contributing strongly to the development of pupils' confidence and encouraging them to believe in their own ability to achieve. In response to good teaching, pupils enjoy lessons and are highly motivated, becoming increasingly effective learners.

Lesson planning is well established and conscientious but the quality is variable. The common format for lesson planning is helpful but the level of detail specified is not consistent across the school. The best planning, in some main lessons and some subjects, identifies what pupils will be expected to know, understand, or be able to do by the end of the lesson, helping both the teacher and the pupils to be clear about what is expected. Where planning is too sketchy, it simply notes the topic or refers to the activities pupils will complete, with a resulting lack of clarity about how progress over time can be ensured. Teachers provide clear explanations and instructions and some questioning is of a high quality, encouraging pupils to think carefully and helping to consolidate knowledge and understanding very effectively. The small number of pupils in each class gives teachers good opportunities to support individuals, assessing understanding, clarifying insecurities or consolidating specific skills.

A strong emphasis is rightly placed on aspects of literacy and numeracy both within the main lesson and in additional lessons. Speaking and listening are assiduously fostered building on the excellent standards achieved in the Kindergarten. Pupils learn to recall and re-tell narratives, learn songs and rhymes by heart with increasing facility, responding to teachers' expectations that they will participate actively in lessons. They become confident, articulate speakers, eager to discuss their work, contribute to discussion or express their views. Handwriting and drawing are methodically taught but presentation, though usually very good in main lesson books, is sometimes untidy or careless in practice books. In the Lower School, pupils have good opportunities, especially in the main lessons, to copy and to write in their own words, effectively increasing their understanding of how language works. In the Upper School, pupils' opportunities to write at length for different purposes are not sufficiently developed. Although they are able to write at length, their writing is often informal in tone, lacking the conventions of formal writing which are expected from pupils of this age. Similarly, while pupils are able to write in a narrative style, there is little evidence of specific investigation or personal research, for example in history or geography, with appropriate analysis of information and comment reflecting critical thinking and drawing conclusions. Some project work lacks clear guidance and structure which would enable pupils to identify a sharper focus for exploration and research.

Teachers know their pupils very well: they show a deep understanding of the aptitudes and learning needs of the pupils they teach, including those with specific learning needs. Support in lessons is of a good quality contributing significantly to pupils' progress. Individual support is carefully planned to meet the needs of the pupils, with teaching observed being sensitive, skilful and effective. Teachers identify more able pupils but planning does not routinely provide specific tasks to ensure they are developing their capabilities as fully as they might. Similarly, planning makes direct reference to differentiation but this is at a fairly elementary level in lessons and remains an area for development.

The school has worked diligently to improve assessment since the last inspection. Records from the Kindergarten provide essential baseline information for Class 1. In Class 2 the school screening for literacy, numeracy and literacy gives good quality information in relation to age-related expectations. This process was interrupted in 2013 because of staffing difficulties but will be resumed this year. Child Studies are a fundamental and valuable part of assessment contributing strongly to the understanding of individual pupils, their capabilities, attitudes and needs. The special needs co-ordinator also carries out individual pupil assessments where appropriate and external specialist support may be sought where necessary.

Marking follows a pattern agreed by the teachers and in line with much Steiner practice. The work of pupils in the Lower School is most often marked with comments from the teacher. These comments are usually brief and encouraging, though occasionally also draw pupils' attention to areas for improvement. In the Upper School there are examples of very good corrective and informative marking. For example, in the Class 9/10 main lessons on chemistry and trigonometry, rigorous diagnostic comments related to the knowledge and skills being practised, pointed out for pupils precisely why aspects of their work were good and which elements needed to be improved.

Regular, detailed assessment of literacy and numeracy is carried out from the Lower School at least twice a year. In literacy for example, the well-designed assessment is based on specific aged-related criteria from Class 3 to Class 8. These assessments build into a progressive longitudinal profile of each pupil's strengths and weaknesses in this key area of learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning are also assessed to help ensure that individual needs are considered and addressed. In discussion with inspectors, some pupils mentioned how helpful and encouraging they found their individual discussions with teachers, focussing on aspects of their work and on their attitudes and habits of working. Rubric-based assessment focuses on achievement in the core provision of the main lesson or a particular subject. These assessments target the identified learning objectives in the main lesson block and assess the pupil's level of competence in each one. This work is established in some classes but the school recognises that this remains work-in-progress with further development required to ensure practice is securely embedded across the school. Work towards the criterion-referenced assessment required by the Steiner School Certificate has begun in preparation for its introduction in 2014.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. The spiritual development of the pupils is strongly fostered through the ethos of the school and the values transmitted by the example of the adults around them. They develop a sense of the spirit or soul and an appreciation of the beautiful from the recitation of verses and moments of reflection, and from the strength of the aesthetic experience in the curriculum. Work in art, music and choral speaking encourages creativity and artistic expression. Whole-school assemblies create a sense of collective purpose with joint reflection, moments of respectful silence and tuneful singing. Seasonal and religious festivals are celebrated through the course of the year and often involve the whole school community, as at the Midsummer assembly.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. From the Kindergarten, pupils grow in confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness as do those who join the school later, sometimes with troubled prior experience. In the same way, pupils develop a sense of themselves and others, learning to take responsibility for their own conduct and increasingly understanding how it affects others. The ethos of the school, and the way in which the expectations of behaviour are implicitly inculcated by staff example are a significant influence on the positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, contributing to their gradual appreciation of the importance of respect for the law. The curriculum provides well for their moral development with extensive discussion of moral dilemmas. This begins with a wealth of narrative stories and myths where the conduct of protagonists exemplifies virtue and its antithesis. Pupils become familiar with Bible stories, the lives of the saints, and those of famous men and women whose work is an inspiration to humankind.

Pupils' social development is outstanding. It is particularly noticeable in the ways in which pupils work collaboratively in lessons moving to work in pairs and groups swiftly and productively, contributing to their own and each other's learning. Pupils expect to take care of others as they do when pupils new to the school arrive and

when older pupils work unselfconsciously with younger ones. Similarly, the school provides informal opportunities for older pupils to take on responsibility to help and support the younger ones, for example in the playground and in activities, festivals and assemblies. They respond with ease and alacrity, as during an assembly where they sang and practiced a circle dance, with the oldest pupils and Class 1 and 2 pupils working side by side with evident enjoyment. The curriculum provides opportunities to extend learning about the values, customs and rituals of different cultures around the world. Pupils increasingly develop the personal qualities needed to live and work in the multi-ethnic and multicultural community of modern Britain. The curriculum provides opportunities for wider social development through the local community dimension. A particularly good example is the community project, the Norwich Initiative in which Upper School pupils participated. The objective was to run a social enterprise project to enable pupils to use their skills in relation to the world outside school. This created an opportunity for co-operative, collaborative and creative work in the community to which the pupils responded with effort and enthusiasm. The curriculum provides a range of themes and subjects which enable pupils to develop a sound knowledge of public institutions and services. In addition, including during the inspection pupils were able to visit the polling station in the school to develop a better understanding of democracy in action.

Pupils' cultural awareness is of a high standard through the values transmitted through the ethos of the school and through the broad curriculum which explores aspects of different ancient and modern cultures. Work in main lessons and subjects such as religion, history and geography and the aesthetic arts helps to ensure that pupils have a good understanding and appreciation of the achievements of their own and other cultures. The celebration of seasonal festivals such as Advent, Martinmas and Michaelmas gives pupils an opportunity to use their very good performance skills in music, singing and movement while understanding, without prejudice, the meaning and significance of what is being celebrated.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. Staff work consistently to encourage courteous and thoughtful behaviour in its pupils providing excellent models for pupils to emulate. They are highly successful in creating an ethos of calm and rationality where pupils feel valued, respected, and very safe and secure.

Policies to safeguard pupils and promote their welfare are clear and detailed in defining and recognising child abuse and explaining precisely what should be done if a case of child abuse is suspected. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding from a highly qualified and experienced external provider, which includes training about inter-agency collaboration. The designated safeguarding person has received appropriate training. Two other members of staff will receive training in the very near future, after several months of trying to get places on courses run by the local safeguarding children board.

Good quality, comprehensive risk assessments are carried out for the various trips and visits with detailed contingency planning and recognition of areas of high risk. This aspect of provision has improved since the last inspection.

The school's policies to promote good behaviour and deal with bullying are based on the need for pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour, a key feature of the school's aims. The policies are detailed, with much helpful explanation and guidance for staff, helping to ensure a consistent approach. The behaviour policy is implemented very effectively by staff and behaviour is managed very skilfully. Pupils and parents report very little bullying and pupils express great confidence that staff would deal with any bullying quickly and effectively, if it should occur.

The school meets all the relevant health and safety requirements. Regular fire drills are carried out termly, and diligently kept records indicate the speed of evacuation and careful identify any issues to be addressed. Pupils are well supervised in the school building and in the playground. The school's first aid policy is detailed and accessible. Several staff have up-to-date training, and two have received paediatric training. The school has clear procedures for pupils who commit serious disciplinary offences and these are used appropriately on the rare occasions when they are deemed necessary.

Healthy living is strongly encouraged through various aspects of the curriculum. The importance of aerobic exercise and a healthy diet is emphasised in PSHE and by class teachers. They give helpful advice about what to bring for lunch and scrutinise lunch boxes and oversee the provision of healthy snacks. Physical education and games develop a wide range of skills through dance, athletics and Bothmer gymnastics.

The admissions and attendance registers meet all requirements and the unexplained absence of any pupil is followed up swiftly.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has clear and robust procedures for staff recruitment and for checking on all governors, staff and volunteers. The single central register complies with all regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is situated in a very pleasant, well maintained building with classrooms which are light, well ventilated and spacious. They provide good teaching and learning environments, enhanced by the quality of their decoration and some pupils' high quality artwork. The buildings and grounds are well maintained. Since the last inspection a new laboratory and woodworking area have been added, strengthening specialist provision. Hard and soft surfaced play areas are more than sufficient.

The washroom facilities meet regulations and hot water for washing of hands is of an appropriate temperature. Drinking water is available in every classroom and also outside. The school has no showers but games for secondary age pupils take place at the end of the day. There is suitable accommodation for the short-term care of any pupil who may become sick.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The provision of information to parents and the community is good. The informative website contains details of all aspects of school life: governance, management, key school policies, and an overview of Kindergarten, Lower and the Upper schools. The termly newsletter, 'Talking Tree', is archived on the website. Trustee meeting minutes are posted on the school notice board.

A clear and concise prospectus is available and a booklet for parents provides essential practical information. Introductory mornings during school time, open days, and the opportunity to experience life in the classroom, are held for current and prospective parents. Parents' evenings are held each term and give parents an overview of life in each class.

Individual consultations are arranged where parents can discuss their child's progress. An annual report is sent at the end of each academic year and includes details of what has been taught, what has been learned, and in the best examples, next steps in learning for the pupil. Written feedback on pupils' individual project work is also made available to parents, and some reports are of an excellent quality.

Parental questionnaires are usefully sent out annually to gauge parents' views. There was a particularly good response to the consultation form sent to parents about the Upper School initiative, the results of which were then carefully analysed and noted. Should a parent have any concerns, there is clear provision for raising them. The high number of respondents to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that their child was happy; that teaching was good; that staff treated children fairly and with respect, and helped them to become more mature. A significant number of parents added personal notes of appreciation.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school's policy for complaints meets the requirements. In the last year there have been no complaints.

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

Norwich Steiner School aims to provide an education based on the philosophy and curriculum developed by Rudolf Steiner. It had a Kindergarten, Lower School and in 2012 an Upper School was opened. The school is a limited company and registered as a charity. A small body of three trustees hold legal and financial responsibility for the school, and its long term interests. They delegate medium term tasks and the day-to-day running of the school to the staff.

In November 2011, an Inspection recommended that the number of trustees should be increased. It has been a challenge to find suitable members with the requisite skills but at present they are actively following up two possibilities.

There was also a recommendation to tighten up on management structures within the school. This has been done through the setting up of a small management team in 2012, appointed by, and accountable to the trustees. There is a clear framework, with a description of roles for the members. The team's primary functions include: formalising existing lines of responsibility and accountability; ensuring effective communication among all areas of the school, and, where problems are identified, ensuring good practice and identified processes are followed. Members attend the regular trustees' meetings on a rotational basis. They send summary reports, for example, on finance and human resources to the trustees prior to the meeting. This organisational model is working effectively.

The day-to-day life of the school is the central concern of the teachers' meetings. The two hourly weekly all-staff Faculty meeting focuses primarily on the children and on staff development. Typically meetings consist of artistic activity, child study, class reviews and co-mentoring. The meetings are extended into an evening meeting for full-time members of staff and these focus on practical and management issues.

The new Upper School is embarking on offering the Steiner School Certificate, an exam-free qualification registered with the New Zealand Government which is equivalent to A Levels and the International Baccalaureate. The preparation for the introduction of the course in September 2014 has been well researched, and planned in meticulous detail.

Progress has also been made in terms of managing both child and teacher assessment. Lesson planning and assessment of children and their work have been improved with common frameworks being devised but they still need to be applied consistently across the school. Quality assurance of teaching has been strengthened taking the form of external assessment, peer appraisal and co-mentoring. Any necessary professional development needs which are identified are given support within the school.

The atmosphere in the school is harmonious and numbers of pupils are growing. The website states that teachers' meetings "ensure that the impulse of Anthroposophy, on which the Waldorf curriculum is founded, remains a living, guiding and increasingly nourishing principle in the school". This evidence is seen

not only through the meetings but also through the sympathetic use of the building, the lessons, the celebration of festivals and the cultural life of the school.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

The trustees might like to consider the following suggestions:

- to continue the urgent pursuit to recruit prospective trustees;
- to consider a public relations drive to increase pupil numbers, and
- to ensure the good management practices that have been established become embedded in school life.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall quality and standards of the early years' provision

The quality and standards of the early years' provision is outstanding. Staff regularly review their work to ensure that they are providing an appropriate Steiner environment for the children. Staff are well qualified and experienced and have a strong capacity to maintain continuous improvement. The staff have a development plan which indicates good self-evaluation of their provision. Children enjoy the gentle rhythm of play both indoors and outdoors, songs, stories and craft activities. The children are encouraged to help setting out and clearing away materials as well as using them with care and sensitivity. The clear vision of the Kindergarten staff and their deep understanding of the Steiner approach enable them to support individual children's development and learning extremely effectively.

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

The Kindergarten follows the Steiner educational programme which enables all children to progress in their development appropriate to their age. Exemptions have been granted by the DfE from the whole of the literacy educational programme, and modifications to communication and language, physical development, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design as well as assessment arrangements for the EYFSP. The planning for the children aged three and upwards is detailed at daily, weekly and longer-term levels and is under constant review to ensure that it meets fully the needs of every child. All children are well supported in acquiring skills to be ready for the next stage in their learning. Adults have high expectations of behaviour and through modelling of skills enthuse and motivate the children to select resources and play independently or in small groups. Children show high levels of engagement and good concentration when busy with practical activities.

The children develop good speaking and listening as well as the social skills which prepare them effectively for progression into the main school. A well-planned daily routine which reflects the Steiner approach following the rhythms of the day, week and year is effectively implemented. Physical skills and control are well developed through knitting and weaving. Seasonal events are celebrated. Perceptive and insightful observations are regularly recorded for the Steiner Waldorf Profile for each child and regular progress meetings with parents are carried out. Staff are effective in providing for the individual children's needs so as to engage them in purposeful activities. Adults plan support and intervention to ensure sustained good progress for all children.

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

In this purposefully planned tranquil environment the children are able to form appropriate bonds and secure attachments with the adults. The explanatory dialogue between staff and children promotes understanding of the natural resources in use, and helps to extend children's vocabulary and model sentence structures for them. The staff have appropriately high expectations of the children's behaviour. Parents share in the transition into Kindergarten by helping their children to settle. The children are happy and enjoy all the accessible activities indoors and out. Children initiate cooperative and imaginative play which develops their language

negotiating skills. Healthy eating is strongly promoted through the daily preparation of snacks in which the children actively participate. Hygiene and personal needs are met effectively by, for example, the children washing their hands as a matter of routine. To ensure a smooth transition into Class 1 the Kindergarten staff liaise closely with the staff from that class and provide a written report for them of each child's stage of development.

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

The leadership and management of the early years' provision is outstanding and teamwork is excellent. The requirements of the EYFS are met with the exception of areas of exemption. Highly effective use is made of time and resources to create a warm welcoming secure environment for the children. Staff meet regularly to share good practice and plan activities and the environment is very well organised. Self-evaluation is embedded in practice to inform the staff of priorities and to identify areas for improvement. The continuous professional development of the staff has a significant beneficial impact on children's well-being and learning. Regular communication with parents fosters a high quality partnership with shared values for the children's personal development and education. Productive relationships with external agencies provide support which contributes to the excellent practice in the Kindergarten.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

Yes.

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