

Norwich Steiner School

Hospital Lane, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 2HW

Inspection dates

14–16 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- All the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders follow the Steiner philosophy and are conscious of 'knowing your time'. They adapt practice so pupils' current needs are met.
- Leaders know the quality of the school's provision well. They can justify strengths and have well-considered plans in place for areas they want to improve.
- Leaders provide a highly personalised curriculum. Pupils find their strengths at their own pace.
- Effective screening and support help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to make good progress.
- Pupils complete regular surveys on how well they are learning. Leaders act upon the findings to continually adapt and improve teaching.
- Leaders' outward-looking approach ensures that safeguarding arrangements are well thought through and effective. The close links with other schools and agencies help to keep pupils safe.
- Trustees monitor standards closely.
- Teachers' high expectations and strong subject knowledge help pupils to make good progress over time.
- Older students achieve highly and are well prepared for when they leave school.
- The kindergarten curriculum enables children in the early years to develop well.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe. They say that bullying is not an issue.
- Parents and carers are universally positive about the quality of the provision their children receive.
- Most pupils attend well. Although leaders have succeeded in helping pupils with previously poor attendance to attend school more often, this remains an area for continued focus.
- Pupils generally behave very well. A few pupils lose focus when learning activities do not capture their interest.
- Pupils benefit from the consistency of approach. Where there is less continuity, notably in mathematics, they achieve less well.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by making sure that teachers plan activities that enthuse pupils, helping them to maintain their concentration fully.
- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics by addressing some historical weaknesses caused by a lack of continuity in teaching.
- Support the small group of pupils whose attendance has varied too much so that they attend more often and can benefit further from the good provision on offer.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Strong leadership from a stable body of core staff has developed the provision well. Leaders are mindful of Steiner routes but are not oblivious to what pupils need within the wider world. They make sure that the education they provide is adapted to meet pupils' needs, giving them currency in a modern landscape.
- The management team works well together. They bring a range of valuable experiences and desirable skills to their roles. They have high expectations of all members of the school's community and hold staff to account well. They make sure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders provide a good quality of education. They make sure that the Steiner curriculum focuses on the needs of the whole child and is consistently delivered throughout the school.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and blends the school's educational philosophy with wider educational demands. Pupils leave with good qualifications and necessary skills that prepare them well for a lifelong journey linked to their own strengths and interests. As one pupil said: 'What I loved about my education at Steiner is that I became the best version of myself I could be.'
- Effective leadership enables pupils with SEND to make strong progress from their different starting points. Pupils benefit from sophisticated screening checks that help to uncover any underlying issues. Tailored support programmes and different ways of working help pupils with SEND to overcome the barriers that they face in their learning.
- There are clear systems in place to monitor pupils' progress against the school's curriculum aims. Leaders hold frequent meetings to discuss pupils' performance. Extra help is provided to any pupils who are identified as not making expected progress. Pupils do well.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils understand the importance of treating everyone equally and fairly. They know the difference between right and wrong and realise that their actions have consequences, both for them and others.
- Pupils are included in the decisions about their education. They comment on what works well for them and where they find things difficult. Their views are listened to and acted upon. This is democracy in action. Lessons cover a wide range of issues linked to protected characteristics, ensuring that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities that help develop their understanding of fundamental British values. Busking to raise funds for a local housing trust that supports homeless people, performing at the Lord Mayor's procession and participating in 'Norwich in Bloom' all cement the importance of community.
- Staff feel well supported. Leaders ensure that training equips staff with the skills they need to do their job well. Staff comments to inspectors were universally positive and highlighted the desire from all involved to continually improve. As one staff member, echoing the view of many others, commented:

'A challenge culture strongly pervades, where open and honest feedback is freely sought and offered amongst all colleagues, which encourages the maintenance and development of standards and school objectives.'

- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are very positive about the effectiveness of the school. The overwhelmingly majority would recommend the school to other parents. They say, for example, that the 'unique and inspiring approach to education allows their children to develop as individuals with respect to their own needs and stages.' There were a small number of parents who said that the lines of communication could be more effective.

Governance

- Trustees accurately assess the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are clear on their roles and provide an effective layer of additional scrutiny. They check that the school meets the independent school standards.
- Trustees have a good strategic vision for the school. Their regular involvement with the school and minutes from meetings show how they hold leaders to account effectively.
- Trustees are open-minded, determined and dedicated to making this a high-quality educational provision. They welcome external monitoring that helps to develop the school further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy contains the latest statutory guidance and is published on the school's website.
- Leaders promote a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive useful training that gives them a secure understanding of their responsibilities for keeping children safe. Staff are confident in how to log any concerns they might have for pupils' safety.
- The designated safeguarding lead and deputy have a secure understanding of effective safeguarding. They quickly and effectively act upon any concerns raised to ensure that families and pupils receive the help and support they need.
- The school's record of pre-employment checks complies with statutory requirements.
- Leaders are outward-looking in their approach to safeguarding. They work closely with Norfolk Constabulary on the safer school partnership and the local authority on Operation Encompass. These close links help them to mitigate potential risks to pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff build good relationships and know the pupils very well. Teachers check regularly that pupils understand the work and, where misconceptions arise, they adapt learning to meet pupils' needs.
- Where practice is most effective, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to make

sure that pupils understand difficult concepts. They provide clear and useful feedback to pupils on how to improve their work further.

- Teachers consistently apply the school's chosen approach to learning. They help pupils to develop intellectual, artistic and practical skills at a pace that is right for them. In this, they have been successful. However, they are reflective of their own practice and use monitoring and discussions to secure further improvements.
- Pupils develop a strong grasp of musical techniques. Their understanding of timing, pitch and rhythm is secure. Inspectors noted pupils playing descant, treble and tenor recorders, glockenspiel and xylophone from a five-part score of Pachelbel's 'Canon'. Pupils are skilfully supported to build from the simplest part through to the most challenging, adding an instrument at a time. Pupils keep up and produce high-quality whole-class instrumental playing.
- Learning environments are typically calm and peaceful. In the lower school, pupils read confidently and recite a range of poems using good recall, intonation and expression. Older pupils discuss issues maturely and articulately.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They mostly plan interesting activities that build on what pupils know, helping them to develop their knowledge and understanding. Where activities are not precisely matched to pupils' needs, the progress of some pupils slows.
- Some pupils have not experienced the same level of continuity in the teaching of mathematics as the majority. The quality of the work for these pupils is not of the same high standard as seen elsewhere.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show good attitudes to learning. They are articulate and good humoured and cooperate well with each other. In discussion, they are candid and evaluative.
- This is an inclusive school where pupils are respectful of others' wishes and needs. It is a school community where people's differences are welcomed and celebrated.
- Throughout the inspection, pupils showed themselves to be independent, sensible and mature. They know how the school helps them to develop socially, academically and emotionally.
- Pupils feel safe and well looked after in school. They know how to stay safe and have an age-appropriate understanding of how to use technology appropriately.
- Pupils have no concerns about bullying. They say this is a small school where everybody looks out for each other. Parents who spoke with inspectors or who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They listen carefully, respond to teachers' requests appropriately and complete work conscientiously.
- Pupils move between lessons quickly and quietly. At breaktimes, they occupy themselves sensibly. Some draw, others chat in small groups, some play games and others play charades. They are well supervised.
- Most lessons are highly productive. On a few rare occasions where learning activities are not precisely matched to pupils' needs, some pupils' behaviour deteriorates.
- Pupils' punctuality is improving but there are still some pupils who continue to arrive late.
- Leaders have successfully helped pupils with previously high levels of absence to attend school more often. Leaders know that this remains an area of focus.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders assess pupils' work and their resultant skills development against the learning goals in the Steiner curriculum. The work in pupils' books, aligned with the school's own information and the results from external assessments, shows that pupils throughout the school make good progress over time.
- Work scrutiny from the lower school shows that pupils learn about an appropriately wide range of subjects and topics. Pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Owing to the school's philosophical approach, whereby some teaching starts at a later time than for most pupils nationally, pupils' writing is below age-related expectations at the start of the lower school. However, pupils catch up quickly and attain in line with their peers in mainstream education before they reach the end of the primary phase.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are strong. They listen attentively to each other, respecting the views and opinions of others. Pupils speak articulately and with confidence.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who do not make the progress expected of them are carefully assessed to check whether there are any additional needs. If there are, they provide tailored support to meet those needs. This enables pupils with SEND to access learning more effectively and to make good progress over time.
- Creative arts across the whole school are a strength. Pupils use range of media from pencil crayons to paint and clay. They show strong skill development. The drawings of Atlas carrying the world and the clay models of a group of people pulling a ship onto shore are examples of artwork that are well above age-related expectations.
- Pupils' work in upper school English shows that they achieve well-developed critical analysis skills and can comment knowledgeably on the use of literary techniques.
- The work in pupils' books across a range of subjects shows that they develop their knowledge and understanding well in the history of art, religion and global issues.
- Older pupils' mathematical work is of a good quality and shows a clear understanding of differential calculus. However, some pupils' understanding of topics such as graph drawing or multiplying negative numbers was not secure.

Early years provision

Good

- Effective leadership by the kindergarten leader ensures that statutory requirements are met. She has a good understanding of early years and makes sure that planning takes account of children's varying needs across a wide age range. This demonstrates a clear understanding of how very young children learn successfully.
- Teachers show a good understanding of the curriculum and the needs of young children. They allow children to decide their own play alongside their planning of more structured activities. Children successfully build good concentration and perseverance skills. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education
- Children's behaviour is good. When they complete tasks, children sit quietly and wait for further instructions. They display positive attitudes because they follow well-established routines.
- The strong relationships between staff and children help foster a nurturing environment. Children all appear happy and settled because staff smile often and speak calmly and quietly.
- The grass, trees, plants, sandpit, willow structure and climbing equipment provide a well-resourced and very large outdoor area. Children play well and cooperate with each other for long periods of time in the beautiful environment.
- Children are well supervised. Adults help them develop well by asking questions that stimulate their curiosity.
- Children play well independently. They are increasingly self-sufficient and interested in what they are doing. They behave well and there is no squabbling or silliness.
- Appropriate safety arrangements are in place. Children understand the safety rules and follow them without question. Leaders make sure that all of the safeguarding and welfare requirements are met and provide children with an age-appropriate understanding of risk.
- Parents support the school fully. Those spoken to show a strong understanding and commitment towards the school's philosophical approach. They feel their children are happy and developing well.

Sixth form provision

Good

- Students successfully follow a programme of study leading to a level 3 qualification, the New Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education (NZCSE). The qualification allows students to progress to the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Students are assessed externally against the learning outcomes in the NZCSE. Leaders monitor pupils' attainment closely. Almost all students have successfully completed the NZCSE, with a significant proportion gaining qualifications at the distinction or highly commended level. Historically, results for the qualification are equally strong.
- The work that students complete confirms that they make good progress from their starting points across the curriculum. In English, for example, the commentaries on Homer's 'Odyssey' show good interpretation and use of 'point, evidence, explanation'. In mathematics, students develop a sound grasp of differential calculus.

- Current students are completing their final year projects on topics as diverse as 'The psychology of addiction', 'The vanilla industry and the ethics of fair trade' and 'Costume making design and skill development'. The projects help pupils develop useful research, drafting, editing, independent working and practical skills.
- Students receive useful and impartial careers advice that helps them to make well-informed choices about what they want to do next. Students have clear plans in place for next year, including university, a paid internship, apprenticeships, employment or a gap year. Most students who start the course complete it successfully.
- Students are well prepared for when they leave the school. Current and former students have gained offers from a range of universities to study courses in mathematics, politics, English literature and aerospace engineering, to name but a few.
- Students benefit from a well-tailored enrichment programme that complements the academic programme. All students complete a work experience placement. They learn valuable skills and gain useful insights into the world of work.

School details

Unique reference number	129511
DfE registration number	926/6154
Inspection number	10094405

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Board of trustees
Chair	Ann Swain
Headteacher	Sandie Tolhurst (chair of management team)
Annual fees (day pupils)	Up to £7,240
Telephone number	01603 611 175
Website	www.norwichsteinerschool.co.uk
Email address	info@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk

Information about this school

- Norwich Steiner School is located in a large Victorian building close to the centre of Norwich. The grounds extend to about three acres and include a playground and two playing fields.
- The school's work is inspired by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner and follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum.
- The school has full exemption from the assessments at the end of the early years

foundation stage and for submitting this information to the local authority. The Department for Education (DfE) has also granted the school full exemption from the early years literacy programme, alongside other modifications, including those linked to the use of technology.

- The school does not have a headteacher. Leadership is provided by the management team.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2006 and was judged to be good. Since then, the school has been inspected by the School Inspection Service, whose most recent full inspection took place in March 2017. At this inspection, the school was judged to be good and all of the independent school standards were met.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place at the request of the DfE.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across all year groups. They looked carefully at the quality of work in pupils' books to assess progress and teaching over time.
- A tour of the site was made to check compliance against the independent school standards.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, staff and members of the board of trustees, including the chair of the board.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views and heard some of them read. They also spoke with a number of parents during the inspection and took account of the 62 responses to the online parental questionnaire, Parent View, the 25 responses to the free-text facility, the 22 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors analysed and scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and development plans, and documentation which included evidence from trustees' minutes, school policies and assessment information. They also considered a range of documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Wendy Varney

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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