

Inspection of Norwich Steiner School

Hospital Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 2HW

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Norwich Steiner School is a positive, respectful community. Pupils enjoy the specialised curriculum which promotes creativity and independence. Children in Kindergarten benefit from playing and learning with each other and adults. They build on their experiences to ready them for learning in the 'lower school'. By the time pupils reach the sixth form, they are confident, articulate individuals ready for their next steps.

Pupils share their thoughts about their learning with adults. Pupils are confident that staff will address any issues in the school, like behaviour or bullying. This is a place where pupils can be themselves. Students in sixth form are great role models for younger pupils.

The curriculum has unique opportunities for all pupils. Pupils learn to play instruments. Pupils learn, and talk about, the various crafts they know for example woodwork, crochet or textiles. A range of books, poems and texts support pupils, of all ages, to enjoy stories and learn about different cultures or historical periods. The curriculum supports pupils well, across a range of suitable subjects.

Students in the sixth form access a qualification that is broad and adapted around students' interests. This supports students to move on to a range of appropriate workplaces, apprenticeships and further study when leaving the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's curriculum is sensitively designed around the principles linked to Steiner Waldorf education. The curriculum covers a range of subjects which overlap, inter-link and build pupils' knowledge over time. Pupils experience a raft of varied subjects like music, craft, social science, science and mathematics. Each subject builds pupil knowledge from Kindergarten to the sixth form class.

Staff have secure knowledge about how the Steiner Waldorf curriculum works. In addition, specialist subject teachers know their subjects well. On the whole, staff know about their pupil's needs and abilities. Staff regularly check on what pupils know or can do. Most lessons build on pupils' previous knowledge and understanding. Pupils' progress is regularly shared with pupils and their parents. Pupils make good progress through the curriculum.

When pupils and children arrive in the school, staff explore whether pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This information is shared with staff so that lessons are adapted around pupils' needs. Sometimes this information is not detailed enough to be helpful to staff. In a minority of cases, some lessons are not adapted around pupils needs. This makes learning harder for some pupils with SEND.

The curriculum in Kindergarten provides children with appropriate opportunities to learn and develop. 'Ring time' using talk, songs and stories to support children well to understand the world around them and develop letter and number knowledge. Staff support children to learn and use new words. Children learn routines. They learn about healthy eating by growing crops and preparing food. They sit and eat together forging positive relationships with adults and each other.

A range of books feature across the curriculum. Pupils get to know these stories well. The stories support pupils to learn new words or discover different cultures. When pupils arrive in lower school, staff begin building on pupils' reading knowledge. Staff use effective approaches to support pupils to learn to read. By the end of lower school, pupils read confidently and fluently. Staff support any pupil who finds reading tricky to catch up with their peers.

The school expects pupils to behave well and the majority do. Behaviour is not a barrier to pupils' learning as staff quickly deal with issues. The improved behaviour system supports the school to identify and put in place additional help for pupils who find behaviour tricky. Robust approaches to supporting and working with pupils and their families means all pupils, including sixth form, attend school regularly. Pupils, in the main, enjoy their school experience.

A well-considered personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is woven through the school, including into sixth form. The PSHE curriculum teaches pupils well and impartially about topics including consent, current affairs and about different religions. Relationships education is taught to all pupils in an age-appropriate way. Festivals promote a sense of community and enhance pupils spiritual and cultural awareness. Trips and visits build on learning in the curriculum.

Pupils have a good understanding about diversity. The school values pupil's opinions which are discussed openly through 'sponsor' time. The school complies fully with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Pupils and students in sixth form access relevant opportunities such as work experience or volunteering. High quality careers advice and guidance supports pupils and students with their next steps. This helps students learn about, and move on to, high-quality apprenticeships, universities and workplaces.

Many parents value the schools work and how the management team communicates with them. As a result of the reduced contact with parents during the pandemic, the management team, supported by the proprietor board, have put in place further work to improve the relationship between the school and it's families.

The management team and proprietor body know the school well. They regularly evaluate the school's work. This has led to improvements in systems and processes linked to behaviour and safeguarding. The school ensure all of the independent school standards, including the requirements of the early years foundation stage, are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some of the information around some pupils' needs is not detailed enough to be helpful to staff or the school. This means that staff do not adapt lessons well enough for a minority of pupils with SEND needs. These pupils do not progress as well through the curriculum as they should. The school should ensure information about SEND need is fully detailed. Additionally, the school should ensure staff use this information well to support pupils with SEND make the best possible progress.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	129511
DfE registration number	926/6154
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10286391
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	100
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Norfolk Initiative Steiner School
Chair	Ann Swain
Headteacher	Sandie Tolhurst (Chair of management committee)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,980 - £8,573
Telephone number	01603 611175
Website	www.norwichsteinerschool.co.uk
Email address	info@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–16 May 2019

Information about this school

- The school's stated aims are inspired by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. Consequently, the school 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. The school is led by a management team.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2019 and judged to be good in all areas.

Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: craft (design technology), mathematics, music and reading. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspections also considered other curriculum areas such as science and PSHE.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' SEND information.

- The lead inspector toured the school site, reviewed checks and maintenance records and spoke on the telephone to an external fire auditor.
- The lead inspector considered the school's complaints process, reviewed the school's actions to complaints and considered how the school works with parents.
- Inspectors met with the management committee, the school's designated safeguarding team, the special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator and members of the proprietor body ('the trustees').
- Inspectors spoke with a range of children, pupils and students across both days of inspection. This occurred in small groups, in lessons and in unstructured times such as breaktime. Inspectors considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised behaviour and bullying records and processes.
- The lead inspector considered the 31 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including 31 free-text responses. The lead inspector also considered 15 responses to Ofsted's survey of staff.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Bessie Owen

His Majesty's Inspector

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