

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:	St Paul's Steiner School
DfE number:	206/6379
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell Supporting Inspectors: Mr Clive Barnett Mrs Jane Cooper Mrs Anne McConway Lay Inspector: Miss Deborah Leah
Dates of inspection:	5-7 February 2013

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	St Paul's Steiner School
Address of school:	1 St Paul's Road, London, N1 2QH
Telephone number:	0207 226 4454
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Email address:	office@stpaulssteinerschool.org
Proprietor:	St Paul's Project 2
Name of Chair of the College of Teachers:	Ms Angelita Ravizzoli
Name of Chair of the Trustees:	Mr Jacob Tas
Name of Administrator:	Ms Angelita Ravizzoli
DfE number:	206/6379
Type of school:	Independent school associated with the Steiner Fellowship
Age range of pupils and students:	3-14
Gender of pupils:	Male and female
Total number on roll:	(Full-time) Boys: 57 Girls: 55 (Part-time) Boys: 19 Girls: 20
Number of children under 5:	Boys: 10 Girls: 16
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	Boys: 2 Girls: 1
Annual fees:	Kindergarten Classes I to VIII
Type of inspection:	Section 162A of the Education Act 2002
Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector:	Mr Mike Thirkell
Supporting Inspectors:	Mr Clive Barnett Mrs Jane Cooper Mrs Anne McConway
Lay Inspector:	Miss Deborah Leah
Dates of inspection:	5-7 February 2013

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service in accordance with Section 162(A) (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by the Service and the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). It was conducted by independent professional inspectors, who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations. The professional inspectors were accompanied by a trained lay inspector, who looked at agreed aspects of the school's management and ethos and reported on these to the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. The lay inspector's findings are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection process. Details of the provision for the Kindergarten (Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)) are included in Section D.

Information about the school:

St Paul's Steiner School is an independent school which provides education for boys and girls between the ages of three and fourteen years of age. The school follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Situated in Islington in North London, it has been established for nineteen years in a Grade 2* nineteenth century former church and adjacent church hall. Pupils' are mainly from the immediate area of North London and the development of the building over a number of years owes much to the hard work and fund raising by their families. The numbers of pupils in the school has continued to increase since the last inspection and there are now a total of 177 attending. Sixty-five pupils are in the Kindergarten, including twenty-six who are under five. A total of fifty-one students are identified by the school as requiring support for varying degrees of special educational need. Three pupils have statements of special educational need. Support is provided currently for six pupils who require support for English as a foreign language. The school aims *'to educate each child to fulfil his/her potential to be empowered adults with a capacity for original and informed thought and an articulate feeling life'*; and by *'equipping them both with the tools and confidence to cope with the academic and other challenges of the late teen years, the strength of character, initiative, flexibility and resilience to adapt and respond to the challenges of adult life'*.

The school follows the Steiner Waldorf system for naming classes. The corresponding National Curriculum names for the classes in the school at the time of the inspection are:

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

Summary of main findings:

St Paul's Steiner School has made further progress since the last inspection by the School Inspection Service in 2009. The school meets its core aims and the number of pupils attending has grown. It benefits from the support of parents and trustees who show strong commitment to the school and to the Steiner goals for education. The quality of education in the main school is good throughout the school, and pupils of all abilities make good progress as they move through the school. The curriculum is good with a number of notably strong features and provides pupils with a rich range of learning experiences. Teaching is good and a significant minority of lessons in the main school are of outstanding quality. Teachers work hard and are committed to supporting pupils' intellectual, as well as personal, development. Pupils recognise the support that they receive from their teachers. Support for pupils with special learning needs is good, although the full-time Special Needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has not yet been replaced. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Behaviour is good, supported by the positive classroom management skills shown by teachers and the calm learning environment typical of most classes. Instances of inappropriate behaviour are rare. Policies and procedures relating to welfare, health and safety are well established and effective. Pupils say that they feel well cared for and matters relating to safeguarding are thoroughly applied. In the Kindergarten the promotion of children's welfare and provision for their personal and emotional development are outstanding. The school meets most of the regulatory requirements.

What the school does well:

- it draws well on the strengths, talents and commitments of the whole school community;
- it encourages independent thought and pupils develop a joy in learning that can be carried forward to later life;
- it provides a structure of regular staff meetings for sharing information which encourages teachers to reflect on their teaching practice; and
- it encourages a close alliance with parents in support of the pupils' education.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

- provide suitable changing facilities and showers for pupils aged eleven years and over at the start of the school year who receive physical education on site.

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

- provide a written summary reporting on each child's progress for the turning five against the early learning goals and the assessment scales;

- ensure that the appropriate proportion of the staff not having a Level 3 qualification attain a relevant Level 2 qualification; and
- ensure that the number of toilets for children complies with the regulations.

Next Steps:

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

- develop guidance for increasing the consistency of assessment recording; and
- ensure that annual school reports to parents are clear about what children have achieved specific to each subject or area of learning.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good with notably strong features. It is rooted in Steiner's understanding of child development and responsiveness to individual learning styles. Pupils are afforded excellent opportunities to learn experientially and thus develop both personally and intellectually. By the time they leave, they are imbued with a love of learning and the requisite skills to work independently and to apply knowledge creatively. Good provision in the Kindergarten meets the needs of the range of children below compulsory school age in the context of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum.

The quality of teachers' medium- and long-term lesson planning is excellent and pays very good regard to pupils' interests and needs. Lessons and homework are carefully sequenced to build upon prior learning. In English, Class 8 began their study of Shakespeare's *'As You Like It'* with a consideration of the motivation of the play's leading figures; their discussions then led into a drama session in which they performed lines by each of the characters. This will build into a performance for pupils and parents at the school and at other Steiner schools; at the same time, the pupils' understanding of the characters in the play was deepened and enriched.

Provision for pupils' aesthetic and creative development is outstanding. All pupils study a broad range of topics led by their class teacher in the Main Lesson, which is the lynchpin of the curriculum and provides the theme for much of the work undertaken in the coming month. These themes are developed in supplementary lessons in literacy and numeracy and are interwoven throughout the rest of the curriculum. The theme of a Class 1 Main Lesson about numerical processes was picked up in a physical education lesson in which pupils had to solve mathematical problems in a game of 'Cranes and Crows'. Particular emphasis is placed on developing speaking and listening skills, and on finding links between subjects. In their Main Lesson, Class 5 followed a theme on Egyptian mythology which saw the pupils work collaboratively to produce brightly coloured and intricate mandalas and then listen attentively to a story about an Egyptian deity. In the same lesson, pupils were encouraged to make links between the beliefs of the Ancient Egyptians and their earlier work on the Hindu religion.

The development of pupils' understanding of personal and social issues is excellent. The opportunities to learn about such matters together with pupils' involvement in the local community are outstanding. These include a programme of visiting speakers, and meeting with an MP at the Houses of Parliament, a trip to the local town hall and work with community groups such as the elderly. A strong emphasis is placed upon promoting pupils' physical education. Whilst facilities for games at school are limited, good use is made of the church hall for eurhythmy (a characteristic aspect of the Steiner curriculum which is an artistic form of movement which encourages and develops spatial awareness) and local amenities for swimming, gymnastics, rock climbing and sailing. Pupils are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and get enough sleep, and the school works with parents to ensure that this happens. The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme has relationships as a

central theme and includes topics on sexual health, personal hygiene, drug misuse, stranger danger, safe travelling and e-safety.

The development of pupils' understanding of science and technology is good. Elements of both are included in the Main Lesson. Pupils are introduced to an appreciation of natural history and botany at an early age through, for example, their regular trips to Hampstead Heath. Astronomy and physics, chemistry, anatomy and zoology are introduced in subsequent years. Pupils study handwork and woodwork throughout the school but, in general, opportunities for the development of pupils' technological knowledge are limited by the school's resources and facilities.

Careers advice is good. Class teachers are responsible for providing advice about the schools that pupils might go on to, starting with an identification of pupils' particular interests and strengths. They make home visits to ensure that parents understand the advice that their child is being given. Visiting speakers are invited to talk about their chosen career path. The Class 8 project affords an opportunity for older pupils to explore careers options and to gain some experience of the world of work. The class teacher is the main point of contact for pupils. In addition, the school provides specialist teaching in French, German, handwork and woodwork, eurhythmy, games and gymnastics swimming, music and gardening; from Class 6 pupils also receive specialist teaching in mathematics.

Provision for supporting pupils with special educational needs (SEN), able, gifted and talented pupils or those with English as an additional language (EAL) is good. Plans for its further development are central to the school's strategic planning. The school recently employed an external consultant to audit its SEN provision which has led to staff training and on-going teacher support. Currently, there is no SENCO (special needs co-ordinator) in post but plans are in hand to fill the position with someone conversant with the Steiner approach. In the absence of the SENCO, the commitment of the rest of the staff has helped to fill the vacuum and ensure that the progress of these pupils has not been impaired. The school works closely with parents to hold regular and helpful reviews of the progress of SEN pupils. The individual education plans for pupils with a statement of educational needs and others requiring additional support are well drafted with clear strategies for application in the classroom. In general, teachers and learning assistants collaborate well together and give careful consideration to identifying suitable resources; however, lesson planning to provide differentiated tasks appropriate to SEN pupils' individual needs is occasionally given insufficient thought. One-to-one lessons in literacy and numeracy are led by the learning support teacher and the school now also employs a specialist EAL teacher and an art therapist.

The development of the outdoor curriculum is another strategic priority. The school believes that it is essential for its pupils to learn about traditional crafts such as weaving, iron working and clay modelling. A farm visit is a well-established part of the Class 3 curriculum and gardening was introduced in Class 5 this year. Such activities supplement very well a rich and varied extra-curricular programme which includes numerous trips and visits at home and abroad, lunch clubs, music and drama productions in school, and involvement in local and international inter-schools competitions, such as the British Council's project to build an environmentally-friendly car which has seen the school reach the finals in Rotterdam.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. A significant minority of lessons are of outstanding quality and no lessons seen were less than satisfactory. This represents improvement since the last inspection. Systems for staff mentoring and sharing information between staff are good and reflect good Steiner practice, supported by strategically planned opportunities for further professional development. Lessons are usually conducted in a calm learning atmosphere and the response of pupils to their teachers, and to learning opportunities, is rarely less than good and most frequently excellent throughout the school. The overall good quality of teaching and high expectations that are set for what pupils can achieve in most lessons supports the good progress that pupils make in Classes 1 to 8.

Lessons are well planned to ensure good levels of challenge to pupils and to encourage them to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort and to show interest in their work. Where planning is best there is a clear structure for learning, which includes, for example in a Class 3 mathematics lesson, review of previous work and a clear progression of activities designed to support the needs of all pupils. Frequent opportunities for pupils to make decisions and to think independently are features of most lessons. This is implemented through the careful use of questioning, the participation of pupils in group activities and, wherever possible, individuals taking a lead role in the learning activity. Teachers encourage all pupils in their class to be involved in whole activities or discussions. Planning overall reflects teachers' good knowledge of their pupils and their specific learning needs, although on occasion intellectual challenge was not sufficient for individual pupils, for example the most able. Attention to differentiation is generally reflected well in teachers' lesson planning including, in some instances, strategies for dealing with individual pupil's personal needs, and the responses show great sensitivity. The good quality of planning reflects the very regular formal opportunities teachers have to discuss the personal as well as intellectual needs of pupils. These meetings are frequent and ensure a good flow of information about pupils' needs among teachers. Overall, teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach, as well as understanding of the Steiner philosophy. This in most cases ensures good pace and the smooth progress of learning. Sufficient resources are available to support learning although, on occasions, these were not sufficient to enliven and extend learning further, for example in science.

Relationships between teachers and their pupils are excellent. Teachers show commitment to pupils' intellectual and personal development, and pupils recognise the support that their teachers provide. They say that they have frequent opportunities to talk to their teachers about their work, and that support is always available should they not understand something. Lessons are often planned to provide such opportunities. Strong emphasis is placed on encouraging pupils to express their views and teachers listen carefully to what their pupils have to say. Pupils confirm that they feel valued. Pupils are taught to be reflective, to listen to their teachers carefully and to follow instructions. For example, in an effective eurythmy lesson in Class 4, pupils were respectful of the rules of movement, of each other and their teacher. Teachers' classroom management skills are good and in consequence behaviour in classrooms is usually good. In the best lessons the pace of learning supports excellent behaviour.

The school has a framework for assessment and pupils confirm that their work is regularly and carefully marked. The excellent relationships that exist between

teachers and their pupils and the overall small size of most classes provide considerable support for the effectiveness of this process. Where classes are larger, for example in Class 5, effective organisation of lessons ensured that pupils of different abilities received thoughtful guidance about their progress and how to improve their work. The monitoring of pupils' progress is supported by regular tests, for example at the end of each block of work completed in Main Lessons. Teachers keep individual records of pupils' progress in their subject areas, although the form of these records varies considerably. Records relate to aspects of personal as well as academic progress. Annual screening tests, taken in Classes 2, 4, 6 and 8, including for literacy and numeracy, provide teachers with an additional useful measure of pupils' progress as well as physical development. Strategies for monitoring progress recognise importantly the different forms of assessments required by pupils at different stages of development.

The school's expectations with respect to assessment are supported in the school by an assessment policy and some outline school guidance, as well as reference to Steiner guidance material. However, the school is aware of the need for greater consistency in recording assessments between teachers. Individual teachers are given the responsibility to undertake the review of their own class's progress, but the school's own guidance lacks sufficient detail with respect to methods to be used to assess each stage of a pupils' development. The school is aware that these areas require strengthening, and development has begun, including seeking ways to utilise computer software for central records. Annual reports to parents which reflect teachers' assessments of pupils' progress sometimes are less detailed about what has been achieved specific to the subject or area of learning.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

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

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an outstanding feature of the school. This is particularly evident in its impact on pupils who, by the time they leave, have grown into independent, confident and articulate young people who are well able to think independently, are considerate and helpful to others, and have a well-developed sense of responsibility to both their local and wider communities and to the environment. Pupils of all ages report that they enjoy their education, appreciate their teachers and value their friendships. Relationships in the school are excellent. Attendance is good and pupils are generally enthusiastic and well engaged in their lessons. They behave with respect. Through regular opportunities for reflection and discussion, the school helps pupils to establish successfully their own moral compass and find their place in the world. They also learn to understand the difficulties faced by others in their school and wider communities and to appreciate the importance of patience and kindness.

A particularly strong feature of the school's provision is the emphasis on project work. From an early age, the pupils learn to show initiative, develop imagination, creativity and sustained independent research skills, culminating in an ability to produce a clear and confident presentation. The high level of challenge provided by the main collaborative projects such as the annual play, the Eco-Marathon and the Wild Green Schools competition, have provided memorable experiences from which the pupils say they have drawn confidence and learnt to accept responsibility for

organising aspects for these events. They make substantial contributions to the local environment and wider community, for example the 'big all-school clean' at Michaelmas is an activity involving the whole school community which has an excellent benefit for all. This helps children understand the value of order and cleanliness. Pupils develop excellent social, team-working and leadership skills through working together and helping one another. By using the school's own multicultural community and wider London society, teachers give pupils excellent opportunities to learn about and appreciate and respect the history, culture, heritage and beliefs of others and other times. Recent projects on Japanese writing and Egyptian history are just two examples where cultural understanding has been successfully promoted.

Excellent use is made of local resources to help pupils understand how a modern democratic society functions. This starts at an early age with visits from people who help, such as the local police and fire officers, and continues with visits by pupils to the local council and to the Houses of Parliament. Older pupils participate readily in debates on topical themes. This activity ensures that they are exposed to a range of viewpoints and enables them over time to establish their own opinions and sustain a logical and coherent argument in defence of them. The church nave is let on a regular basis for community events in the evenings and at weekends. The school operates a clear policy for lettings to ensure the protection of its pupils.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is outstanding. Pupils say that they enjoy school and the friendships that they make. They appreciate the staff's care and concern for them together with their overall approachability. They feel safe in school and know to whom they would turn if they were worried about something. The range, clarity and detail of the school's policies covering all aspects of pupils' welfare, health and safety are outstanding. Health and safety policies are regularly reviewed by the responsible member of staff, the College of Teachers and the trustees, most recently in the light of the latest equalities legislation. The teachers are currently revising the anti-bullying policy to take greater account of cyber bullying and a parents' evening on this issue has been held.

The school retains an independent health and safety adviser who undertakes an annual audit of the school's buildings and who also contributes to the training of staff and trustees. Care is taken to ensure the safety of all electrical equipment and the outcome of regular fire drills is recorded meticulously. Particular care is taken over assessing risks; assessments of routine activities are recorded and regularly reviewed. The risk assessment of more hazardous or exceptional activities such as school visits overseas is considered by the trustees and staff's health and safety committee which meets monthly. Its authorisation is required before all such visits are allowed to take place. The school has a written First Aid policy. Staff responsible for First Aid are appropriately qualified and understand the scope of their duties. The staff's responsibilities for child protection are clearly articulated in the child protection policy; all receive regular training, most recently in 2012. Both the designated child protection officer and her deputy have been trained to an

appropriate level, as has a member of staff with regard to safer recruitment. Pupils are made aware of the identity of independent adults who will listen to their concerns and information about Child Line is readily available.

The policies promoting good behaviour and preventing bullying are clear; both include a statement about the school's commitment to promoting the welfare of pupils and outline the sanctions to be applied in the case of misdemeanours. Pupils feel that generally behaviour has improved over the last three years. The few incidents of misbehaviour or bullying that occur are effectively dealt with and recorded appropriately. Some older pupils feel that teachers do not always apply behaviour policies consistently for more minor matters. The school is aware of this and is currently formulating a matrix of consequences for poor behaviour as a means of achieving greater consistency in this area. Staff, often supported by parent volunteers, are deployed effectively in supervising pupils when on site or when involved in off-site activities, such as walking to or from the local gymnasium. When accidents occur they are recorded in detail and care is taken to learn the appropriate lessons. The school's admissions register and all attendance registers are complete and up-to-date. Pupils are also encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles consistent with Steiner principles; a culture of respect for oneself and for others pervades the school's curriculum and ethos.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

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

The school's procedures for checking the suitability of all proprietors and staff comply fully with the regulations. Appropriate files are maintained carefully of the checks completed and the required details maintained in a register.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

Located in a former church and Grade 2* listed building, the school's accommodation is a delightfully quirky warren of classrooms on three floors. The conversion from church to school has been the work of an intensely committed whole school community and has been of improvement constantly over nineteen years. Issues raised by the last inspection concerning ventilation and the improvement of facilities for sick pupils have been duly rectified. However, the school does not currently meet all of the new requirements of the standards.

Each classroom is different and special and each provides a suitable and pleasant learning environment which is appropriately lit, ventilated and heated. All classrooms have a sink which also gives pupils access to drinking water; some have small kitchenettes and a WC for the sole use of the pupils. This, together with the other WC provision, meets the regulatory requirements. The former nave and the on-site church hall provide useful teaching spaces for drama, music, eurhythm and games, but the absence of specialist rooms and facilities for examples for science, restricts the range of experimental work that pupils can do. A small outdoor space

surrounds the school with a separate area for the kindergarten children. The school makes creative use of these outdoor spaces for both learning and play, including the adjacent St Pauls Green, to which the Steiner community has contributed planting and landscaping improvements. The school uses local resources well to augment its curriculum for swimming, gymnastics and sports. However, where physical education is provided in school there are no suitable changing and showering facilities for children aged eleven years and over.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most but not all of the requirements.

What does the school need to do in order to comply with the regulations?

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

- provide suitable changing facilities and showers for pupils aged eleven years and over at the start of the school year who receive physical education on site (paragraph 23A(1)(c)).

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The school provides a wide range of information to parents and prospective parents. The prospectus is colourful and attractive and sums up the school's ethos and curriculum aims with quotations from Rudolf Steiner, as well as from parents and pupils. The parents' handbook is informative and updated annually through e-mail and hard copies available from the school reception. The handbook includes helpful descriptions of key Steiner Waldorf subjects, a clear account of the school's management structure and objectives, financial details, as well as the practical arrangements in respect to the children. Its tone is welcoming, while it makes clear and explicit what the school expects from parents in order that each child may benefit fully from the education offered.

The fortnightly newsletter is concise, yet wide-ranging. Besides dates and events, it includes introductions to new trustees, invitations to parents to comment on possible new developments, celebrations of pupils' work, and recent news from the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF) such as EYFS exemptions. It is supplemented helpfully by postings on notice boards. The school's website posts the required policies, including in relation to admissions, anti-bullying strategies, cyber bullying, behaviour and discipline, complaints, support for EAL, health and safety, assessment and SEN.

Class parents' evenings each term provide a regular forum for discussions and parents questions. In addition, teachers encourage individual consultations with parents to talk about each pupil's progress. Home visits are made by all class teachers, which build positive relationships with parents. Parents receive an annual written report on their child's learning which describe their child's intellectual and personal development and engagement with the curriculum. A majority of parents express their warm appreciation of the school and gratitude for the education received by their children.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

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

The school has a comprehensive policy and procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints. Records show that one formal complaint was received in the past twelve months, which was resolved without recourse to a panel.

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

St Paul's is very well organised and managed. Creative team working and immense good will are apparent throughout the school, both in its management and the quality of the building restorations. Workdays regularly attract over forty volunteers, who do necessary maintenance and deep cleaning. The Council of Trustees of St Paul's Steiner School carries overall responsibility for health and safety, legality and finance in the school; trustees are elected by members of the association at an annual general meeting. Leadership and management of pedagogical matters are delegated to the College of Teachers. Responsibility for day-to-day administration of non-pedagogical issues is devolved to mandate holders and the Resources Management Group (RMG). Trustees have a clear, written job description.

The Trustees and College hold regular joint meetings. They show commitment, and actively share their areas of professional expertise in practical and helpful ways. They assume individual governance responsibility for areas such as premises, pedagogy, finance and human resources. One trustee has recently attended informative courses on the implementation of the Equalities Act 2012 and on Steiner Waldorf School Leadership. Legal advice is sought by trustees from outside professionals to check the school's compliance concerning SEN and related procedures. The ethos of the school is upheld principally by the teachers, who study the principles of Steiner Waldorf education and practice. This happens through their regular meetings. Trustees, staff and parents also support the school's aims and ethos through their understanding of St Paul's as a whole community where each individual has a valued part to play. Seasonal festivals, celebrated together, enrich the sense of belonging, through joyful celebrations. A long-standing member of staff remarked that *St Paul's seems to evoke in parents the most extraordinary passion.*

Communication among the many meetings works well. Clear minutes are kept, and actions are delegated and followed up effectively. Individual mandate holders are entrusted with all decision making, once they have carried out a thorough consultation process. Colleagues commented that they had never felt ignored before a decision was taken and implemented. Candid feedback is given to mandate holders and prospective ones as to their suitability for particular responsibilities. The school management feels that clarity of responsibility and decision making has enhanced positive working relationships. This builds mutual cooperation among adults and strengthens the feelings of security and care experienced by the children. A chair of one of the teachers' meetings commented: *The advantage is that it's very collegial; perhaps we are getting to Steiner's vision of what a College of Teachers is about.*

St Paul's strives to be a constructively, self-critical organisation. An increasing strength of St Paul's is the rigour with which evaluations are carried out. Those holding responsibility can and do challenge proposals if they do not appear to be in the children's best interest; the completion and checking of thorough risk assessments has exemplified this. Class teachers receive documented feedback from their termly parents' evenings, which includes suggestions for future helpful

topics. Responses are collated across all classes and shared with the College of Teachers. The school is seeking to appoint a new Education Support Coordinator, who will support the work of the College mandate holders and assist with mentoring, staff appraisals and continuing professional development.

Finances have significantly improved in recent years, helped by determined debt eradication, and continued fund-raising events using the architectural assets of St Paul's. The Nave Project now advertises itself as a possible wedding venue. Parents contribute to community supported fee concessions and give much practical help and time to the school. St Paul's aspires to become a full member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, and to this end most policies and practices have been carefully reviewed. The teachers are now confident that they achieve the level of good practice delineated in the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Code of Practice. Much of the evidence gathered during the inspection supports this judgment.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

The trustees might like to take into consideration the following suggestion as to where specific improvements could be made:

- maintain their good practice of reviewing key policies regularly, with advice, where appropriate, from professional experts. The school might consider sharing this knowledge with sister schools in the Steiner Waldorf movement, and continue working towards full membership of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship.

SECTION D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall quality and standards of the early years' provision

The overall quality of the early years' provision is good in all four Kindergarten classes. Each class contains the full age range from three to six years. Some aspects, such as the promotion of children's welfare and provision for their personal and emotional development are outstanding. All children receive a high standard of care from dedicated staff to enable them to feel safe and secure. Children quickly become familiar with daily routines, are confident and readily engage in conversation and singing or spontaneously initiating their own play. Written reports have been sent out to the parents of five-year-old children. The content of these reports does not reflect progress against the Early Learning Goals. The EYFS five-year-old profile scores were shared verbally in individual meetings with parents. Due to expansion of the provision, they have been unable to keep pace with the need for further qualified staff and an extra toilet. There is the capacity to sustain continuous improvement.

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

The setting makes good provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend the school. In the context of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, most children reach expected levels of development. In accordance with this approach, several exemptions and the modifications to the EYFS have been granted. These include complete exemption from the whole literacy educational programme and modifications to communication and language, physical development, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design. Children with EAL and SEN receive support from staff, who work very well with parents and professionals to provide an effective learning environment. The communication and language skills of the children are developed through expressing themselves and listening to daily story times, where they are able to recall and recreate the story with others, as well as during creative play where they interact, negotiate and take turns, and the seasonal songs and verses of the ringtime. The care and attention given to their personal, social and emotional development endows children with the confidence to initiate conversation. Children are acquiring practical skills during their play where careful movement and fine dexterity are required to be ready for the next stages in their learning.

An emphasis on imitation and play encourages children to make choices and to engage actively in purposeful tasks such as table setting, wool washing, seed-grinding, weaving, soup-making and baking. A good range of natural materials are available to the children, which they effectively use in their creative play. Regular observation is recorded for the Steiner Waldorf Profile of the child, but these are not sufficiently closely linked to the goals for EYFS. Effective support is provided, where needed, for those with EAL or SEN. In addition to the regular meetings with parents, additional meetings are arranged if requested by parents with each child's key person.

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

Provision for the children's well-being is good. Children show respect for themselves, others and the environment. They display happiness as they play co-operatively with

the natural resources. The secure outdoor space enables them to further explore nature and use their imagination as well as providing opportunities for creativity. Daily outdoor play in all weather conditions and the weekly morning walk, extend their understanding of the importance of physical exercise and healthy living routines. A strong feature of the Kindergarten is the daily freshly prepared meal for which all the children sit patiently to be served instilling a deep appreciation of a healthy diet. This is a social time for which the children prepare by moving the furniture, counting the chairs and place settings and setting the table with pottery and cutlery. They are independent in managing their own hygiene and personal needs. For transitions within the school, teachers in Kindergarten hold discussions with staff in Class 1, and in the last half of the summer term they run a transition group for all the children going up to Class 1 in the following September.

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

The leadership and management are good. Teamwork between teachers and support staff is seamless and they are all motivated to create a homely environment where children enjoy their experience. They have effectively identified some areas for improvement such as report writing and have produced an action plan. They are aware of the regulatory requirements which they are currently unable to meet and have plans to address these, namely that at least half of staff who do not have a Level 3 qualification should have a Level 2. However, children are well cared for in this friendly environment, and paediatric First-Aid training has been undertaken by the staff. Regular meetings are held and in-service training provided. Relationships with external agencies and partnerships with parents are strong so that children are well supported. Parents have regular meetings with staff, although they do not currently receive sufficient information on assessment of progress in relation to the EYFS. The quality of written reports provided to parents does not enable them to link progress to the EYFS in order to assess the effectiveness of the provision and to identify areas of relative strength or weakness. The school provides written summaries reporting on each child's progress, but these are not sufficiently linked to the Early Learning Goals and the assessment.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

No

What does the school need to do in order to comply with the regulations?

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

- provide a written summary reporting on each child's progress against the early learning goals and the assessment scales;
- ensure that at least half of the staff not having a Level 3 qualification attain a relevant Level 2 qualification; and
- that the number of toilets for children complies with the regulations.

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