



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

INSPECTION REPORT FOR ST. PAUL'S STEINER SCHOOL

DfE No: 206/6379

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

The quality of education	Good	2
Pupils' personal development	Outstanding	1
Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety	Good	2
Leadership, management and governance	Good	2
Effectiveness of the Early Years' provision	Good	2

Compliance with the Independent School Standards:

The school meets the regulatory requirements of schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Compliance with the Equality Act 2010:

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

Compliance with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage:

The school meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Date of inspection: 14 – 16 June 2016

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

St. Paul's Steiner School is a good school with some outstanding features. For the vast majority of pupils it is a happy place to study and it is also interesting and challenging. The good curriculum is broad in terms of subjects which are interpreted and taught in imaginative ways. Pupils' attitudes are very positive and their academic progress is good. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Staff are very committed and work hard to ensure that pupils do well. Teachers are clear about how well their pupils are doing and almost always address their identified needs successfully. Occasionally this is not done well enough, particularly for more able pupils. Though assessment is good, the school is currently working to introduce a different assessment system but it has not yet designed a system which addresses what it wants to do. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and their progress is assessed regularly. Children enjoy their time in the good quality Kindergarten where the wide range of activities support and encourage them to become involved in a way that follows Rudolf Steiner's principles to good effect. However, a small improvement in reporting children's progress to parents is required as is better continuity of work for older pupils as they move into Class 1.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their confidence, knowledge, understanding and respect for others are impressive. Pupils are well looked after and provision for their welfare, health and safety and safeguarding is good. Risk assessments are very thorough although the authorisation process for visits needs to be more visible. The school benefits from good leadership and management. The Trustees have been innovative in developing an efficient management structure and ensuring that all the independent school standards are met. Administrative staff work tirelessly for the pupils but their responsibilities and workload are sometimes excessive.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- ensure that the school reports on its work to develop the children's literacy skills in the Kindergarten;
- ensure that work for the over fives in the Kindergarten links to previous work and future work in Class 1;
- ensure that the ongoing development of assessment works towards consistency across the school so that pupils' attainment from starting point to end point can be accurately assessed and that more able pupils are challenged appropriately;
- make it clearer who has authorised a school visit following scrutiny of the risk assessment;
- review the roles and work load of administrative staff to ensure that they are reasonable.

SECTION B: INFORMATION

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

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

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors observed lessons, looked at a sample of pupils' work and formally interviewed groups of pupils, Trustees and staff. Inspectors reviewed school documentation and also spoke to administrators who explained their roles. The views of parents and pupils expressed through their responses to questionnaires were carefully considered.

The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mr Paul Armitage
Team inspector:	Mr Andrew Rickett
Lay inspector:	Mrs Sally Jenkinson

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Paul's Steiner School is an independent, non-selective and non-denominational school for children between the ages of three and 14 years. It is housed in a decommissioned, 19th century Anglican church and adjacent hall in Islington. There are small areas for learning and for play around the church and games take place off-site using external facilities. The school follows the philosophy of Dr. Rudolf Steiner. It seeks to 'provide an education that supports the development of well-rounded human beings who are resourceful, creative, responsible and curious; ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century with the problem-solving skills required for a sustainable future'.

There are currently 198 pupils on roll, an increase since the last inspection. Thirty-one children are under five. The oldest pupils in the Kindergarten are aged six years. Thirty pupils have been identified by the school as having special needs of various kinds and a very small number have educational health and care plans. There is a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language but they are competent English speakers. Pupils come predominantly from north London.

The school has recently gone through considerable change at management level with restructuring and changes in personnel. The Principal has recently retired and an interim Principal is in place until the new appointee takes up the post in September. Pupils move on to a number of other schools including a large number to the Steiner school at Kings Langley.

The school follows the Steiner Waldorf system for naming classes. National Curriculum comparison is given in the following table:

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

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Pupils' learning and achievement

Pupils' learning and achievement are good and overall they make good progress from their different starting points. In all classes, pupils develop good subject knowledge appropriate to their age and ability. Samples of pupils' work show that they use this knowledge increasingly well in their writing and when they speak about a topic. They are also competent across a broad range of other skills. For example, older pupils used their language and analytical skills to explore the meaning of war poems and showed considerable empathy with the poets' feelings. In another lesson, the vast majority of younger pupils worked speedily and competently at working out equations and then discussing results with each other. In a lesson on King Arthur, the sentiments of key figures were very well expressed in the form of a script for a play. Pupils also achieve well in art, drama and music and in what the school calls 'rhythmic work'. The achievement of pupils in the rhythmic section of a Class 1 main lesson was a delight to see.

Pupils engage well in their work. A strong element of learning is the extent to which they cooperate and encourage each other and share ideas. Similarly, in some classes, pupils are involved in assessing each other's work which they do with rigour and sensitivity. This mutual support aids pupils' progress by developing understanding. As is the practice in Steiner education, much of the work that pupils do is across subjects helping pupils to use their knowledge in one subject to expand their understanding of another. For example, it is quite common for work in mathematics and science to be enhanced by a poem or story or song which encourages progress across a breadth of understanding.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and this helps pupils to make good progress overall. A key feature of the teaching is the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers to ensure that pupils do well and are challenged. Teachers are mostly well aware of pupils' individual learning needs so use a variety of good teaching styles including responding well to the pupils' ideas and questions. This is aided by the Steiner practice of pupils remaining with their class teacher over a number of years whenever possible. This responsive teaching is well illustrated in 'Main Lesson' at the start of the school day when teachers use topics to build on previous learning and introduce new knowledge and skills. For example, in a science lesson pupils were asked to recall their extensive vocabulary on digestion and then the teacher carefully extended the vocabulary at a pace suitable to the pupils, to explore other bodily functions.

In the very small number of weaker lessons, teachers did not always capitalise on pupils' positive interest and attitude and did not check effectively what all pupils understood so that the good practice elsewhere of teaching focussed on pupils' needs was missing. There were also rare occasions when teachers missed an opportunity to correct a misconception or insist that pupils follow a consistent

approach, especially in setting out their workings in mathematics. The school's procedures to identify pupils who are more able are at an early stage of development and it has not yet agreed definitions of what constitutes able, gifted and talented. Currently, for the vast majority of pupils, teachers do respond to the talent they see, but, occasionally, they are not yet sufficiently alert to identifying signs of a pupil's potential.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is good. Procedures for identifying pupils requiring extra support are thorough and acted upon speedily. Pupils have Individual Educational Plans. These are detailed, practical and are regularly reviewed. Weekly meetings between the Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and class teachers enables concerns to be discussed and approaches considered. There are regular reviews of pupils' progress towards meeting their targets. This process is especially thorough for those with Educational, Health and Care plans. The SENCO also liaises closely with the learning support teacher and teaching assistants to review the impact of their support. If required, the curriculum is suitably amended to address individual needs.

The school has recently begun to review assessment procedures in the light of national changes so as to provide even more information on pupils' progress than at present. While the former arrangements ensured that teachers had clear records of how well individual pupils were doing and acted well on this information, the methods of assessment were personal to the teacher and there was limited consistency between teachers. Staff have now developed a method which seeks to be common to all teachers. They have developed portfolios of pupils' work from each year group to help them set expected levels of achievement and progress. The new system started in March this year.

The development of the new system is at an early stage. It still provides individual teachers with an accurate record of pupils' progress so that appropriate work is still correctly planned for pupils. However, the Trustees' objective of a fully common approach between staff is yet to be achieved. In particular, there is no agreement on base line and later assessment to enable teachers, parents and the Trustees to have a clear idea of how well the children in the school as a whole have progressed between their entry to the school and when they leave. Under the new arrangements, it is still not possible to say what percentage of pupils has achieved expected or better than expected progress. It is also not possible to give similar, overall details for groups of pupils in the school such as those with English as an additional language or those with special needs. The Trustees and the school's senior management are addressing this.

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. Its aim is to educate the whole child in a healthy and balanced manner and to address the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual capacities of the developing child through age appropriate provision. It does this well. It covers almost all the subjects of the National Curriculum in a way that is consistent with Steiner approaches to curriculum content and ways of teaching. A wide range of subjects is included which are not part of the National Curriculum such as astronomy, eurythmy and a range of crafts. In 'Main Lesson', topics which are popular with pupils include fables and the lives of Saints,

Hebrew, and Norse mythology and Indian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman philosophy. As a consequence, pupils learn to become highly motivated and engaged in their learning and achieve well. In the garden there is a forge and the use of mud in the garden by younger children after the rain is messy but creative. The outdoor curriculum is regarded by the school as especially significant in promoting respect for living things. There are written schemes of work and clear, useful lesson plans.

The curriculum is also good because there is a high level of flexibility in what is included in a specific subject and how this content is taught. This keeps the curriculum relevant to the pupils and maintains their enthusiasm and interest. A good example was observed in science through the study of plants. This included poetry which showed how people have interpreted knowledge and applied it to everyday life. Similarly, a story, written to explain a mathematical concept, showed the extent to which the pupils understood that concept. The curriculum also provides many opportunities for research, not least for the Class 8 project presentations on a range of topics at the end of the summer term.

As is usual in Steiner education, the school does not offer Information Technology (IT) in the curriculum. There are plans to introduce IT for pupils' use but this would only be for older pupils. Pupils of all ages confirmed their use of computers at home.

The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits which help to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Recent visits have been to the Old Bailey, the Houses of Parliament, the National Theatre, Neasden Mosque and Ridley Road market to discover Nigerian food. There is a good number of activities which enrich the curriculum for older pupils. The school is currently trialling after-school clubs for younger pupils to determine demand.

2. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The quality of pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their developing confidence and understanding of themselves is striking. They are polite, well-mannered and thoughtful. Behaviour is outstanding and attendance is just above average. Pupils report that there is no bullying and that minor issues are sorted out very quickly.

When interviewed in groups, pupils were able to articulate clearly their views of the school and the extent to which the curriculum and the teaching meet their needs. They demonstrated a broad worldview, understanding some of the complex issues facing different countries and were clear about evolving British values. For example, older pupils spoke easily about the different types of family in the UK and respect and support for the disabled and people with a sexual orientation different from their own. In large part, this is due to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education offered by the school in class, assemblies, visits to places of educational interest, and to the contributions of outside speakers coming into school. During the inspection, a speaker from a South American country came to speak to the pupils and expressed somewhat controversial but acceptable opinions. The pupils responded well, putting forward their own, strong counter views.

Pupils also play a strong role in the local community. There are links with a wide range of charities supported by fundraising initiatives such as coffee mornings and cake stalls. The school has developed links with local organisations such as the Parish Church and Islington Green Spaces which has given pupils access to open spaces for games and play. The school has helped to develop these facilities which are available to everyone.

Pupils have a very well informed understanding of safeguarding. Older pupils were articulate about how to protect themselves in relation to e-safety, drugs and sex. They explained the dangers of 'sexting' and themselves raised issues relating to pornography. They were less understanding about the signs of grooming in situations other than via computer web-sites.

Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of education, attending information days at their next schools, and career choices are discussed with them at this and other times.

3. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The quality of safeguarding and welfare, health and safety is good and is firmly rooted in the school. All staff have been trained in safeguarding by an outside body and they are regularly updated as issues arise. When interviewed, they gave clear accounts of types of abuse and knew how to report it. They were also confident about reporting issues themselves and about whistleblowing. All staff in a selected sample had signed to confirm that they had read 'Keeping children safe in education'. Staff are less secure in their understanding of how social services deal with issues once reported. Staff have also had Prevent and Channel training which raises awareness of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Staff are sensitive to the underlying issues prevalent in the borough.

The DSL has recently updated her training and her deputy is also suitably trained – both at the appropriate level. The DSL has very good, regular relationships with the borough's safeguarding team from whom she frequently seeks advice. Her role is very well understood by staff. The child protection files are in good order and suitably stored away from the pupil's main file.

The school has the required range of policies including those for child protection, whistleblowing, welfare, health and safety, anti-bullying and behaviour. There is also an intimate care policy. Some minor amendments to the policies were suggested during the inspection and advice was followed. Staff understand the policies and procedures work well. Staff are suitably trained in first aid and fire safety.

Although there are no computers used in teaching and learning, the school takes e-safety very seriously and teaches it as part of the curriculum and has organised information and discussion events for parents. Mobile phones are placed in a box by reception and teachers must keep them concealed. The arrangements are based on goodwill so the school is considering introducing monitoring in line with

the arrangements outlined in the September 2016 version of 'Keeping children safe in education'.

Risk assessments are thorough. The school keeper does a daily round of the premises and keeps a written record. Risk assessments prepared by the school are personal to the school and not generic and are very well written. In relation to risk assessments for visits, it is not sufficiently clear who has authorised the visit following scrutiny of the risk assessment. In the risk assessments seen by the inspectors, there was no evaluation of what went well and what could be improved. Fire and building risk assessments are carried out regularly. The documentation is very well presented with photographs of building risks. Records confirm that fire drills are carried out regularly and alarms and fire-fighting equipment are routinely maintained and checked.

Pupils have a very good understanding of keeping themselves healthy. Inspectors attended a lesson on the different elements in food that are needed by humans and there is much physical activity such as games, rhythm and eurythmy to contribute to a healthy life.

The single central record is in good order and appropriate checks are carried out on all new staff.

The attendance register is now computer-based and a small sample indicated that the appropriate codes are being used. The admissions register is currently being uploaded onto the computer system. Inspectors spoke with a representative of the company carrying out this work to establish when this would be completed. In the meantime, inspectors used hardcopy backup to confirm that the school holds all the required information. The school provided evidence of the proper procedures for missing children and confirmed that it informs the local authority of pupils' movements.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and governance are good. In recent years and instigated by the Trustees, the school has moved from an organisation predominantly run by the College of Teachers to one where the school has a Principal with Trustees taking a supporting role. This has allowed the College of Teachers to return to its original role as a forum for discussing pedagogy and related issues. The former Principal, who has retired from school only recently, together with the current interim Principal have developed this organisation very successfully and there is now a very efficient school organisation. Also critical to the success of the plan has been the active role of the Coordinators and the interim Facilitation Group. The members of this group have liaised between the Principal, Trustees and staff to keep everyone briefed on the interim arrangements and to provide a vehicle for discussion.

Overall, the new arrangements have created a clear, challenging ethos, good teaching, a strong curriculum and secure safeguarding. It has also helped young people to develop into confident, informed persons in the best traditions of Steiner Waldorf education. The school knows itself: the self-evaluation document

provided by the Trustees and staff for the inspection was accurate. Almost everything works very well but administrators are sometimes over-worked.

The accommodation is well looked after and meets all requirements. The complaints procedure meets requirements. There have been no formal complaints in the past year. Parents receive all the required information and additional useful information.

Governance

St Paul's is a school where active Trustees, senior managers, administrators and staff are now working very closely together. It is an interesting, innovative model with a strong ethos based firmly on Steiner Waldorf philosophy.

The Trustees are well qualified. A recent appointment is the head of safeguarding in a local authority in London bringing valuable expertise to the board. Inspectors had an interesting discussion with Trustees about how detailed their understanding of their remits should and could be, given the complexity of issues and Trustees' voluntary status. The Trustees are considering ways in which these matters can be best resolved.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection and the Trustees have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS' PROVISION

The overall effectiveness of the Kindergarten is good. The issues for early years identified at the time of the last inspection have been effectively addressed.

The outcomes for children are good. All children make at least good progress in their learning and development relative to their starting points and the range of their needs. They are well-prepared for the next stage of their education. Where children have identified special educational needs or have English as an additional language (EAL), individuals are supported very effectively. This provision is a significant element of the Kindergarten's work as approximately 40% of the children either have EAL or are bilingual.

The children's personal and emotional development is good. They form excellent relationships with the adults in school and are outstandingly well prepared for their progress towards the next stage of their education. They feel very secure and happy. They gain a sense of achievement and enthusiasm for learning which is evident in all four classes. The children are self-confident and self-aware. This is a strength of the Kindergarten, especially when combined with their outstanding behaviour. Children's social and emotional preparation for the transition into Class 1 is also outstanding as is their emotional security and the excellent relationships they have with the adults. Attendance is regular and punctuality is good. The children understand how to keep themselves safe from risks. Healthy eating is encouraged, as is exercise. Equality and diversity are promoted outstandingly well, linked to cultural experiences, and prepare children for life in Britain today.

The curriculum is well planned to match the needs of the children and the Early Years Foundation Stage meets legal requirements. Where appropriate, exemptions and modifications have been obtained so that the school curriculum reflects Steiner values. The staff plan good and appropriate activities for those children aged over five, including making dolls, weaving, finger-knitting and performing a puppet show. However, the curriculum is not outstanding because links to previous work and to the future work in Class 1 are not sufficiently clear. Aspects of literacy and mathematical learning are not explicitly identified.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Practitioners have high expectations of what each child can achieve. They have an outstanding understanding of the Kindergarten age group as well as an excellent knowledge of how this can be used to promote children's learning and development. Assessment information is well-used to plan appropriate teaching and learning strategies to ensure that all children make good progress. The staff are moving towards a year-by-year overview of children's development and progress through the time they are in the Kindergarten. This has usefully expanded their appreciation of the need to provide different activities and review staff expectations where the oldest children in a class may be twice the age of the youngest.

The arrangements for safeguarding are fully met. Kindergarten staff have been appropriately trained and share an understanding of, and responsibility for, protecting children.

The leadership of the Kindergarten changed at the start of the current academic year. It is good. Leaders have a clear view of how to promote and secure improvement and are taking steps to ensure this. Staff share a collegiate approach and have high expectations of what the children can achieve. They promote good standards of provision and care for the children. Staff mentoring and supervision procedures are good, and professional development is well supported. Staff evaluate their own work effectively. They seek the views of parents and take these into account when considering improvements.

There is close liaison with parents and carers which helps them to understand how their child is progressing and how they can support this. Reports to parents are now made both when their children are aged five and again when they leave the Kindergarten. These reports are of good quality. However, while reports note that the school has been granted exemption from the literacy requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is no mention of other aspects of literacy that are taught.

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			
Email address	schooloffice@stpaulssteinerschool.org			
Web address	www.stpaulssteinerschool.org			
Chair of Trustees	Mr Jim Sharp			
Person registered with DfE as proprietor under paragraph 20 of Part 4	St Paul's Steiner Project II			
Principal	Mrs Helen Weatherhead			
Early Years Manager	Mrs Sarah Newby			
DfE Number	206/6379			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	From £6,650 to £7,825			
Age range of pupils	3 – 14 years			
Gender of pupils	Male and Female			
Total number on roll	full-time	198	part-time	0
Number of children under-5	Boys:	12	Girls:	19
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	83	Girls:	84
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	2	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Boys:	23	Girls:	18
Type of inspection	Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008			

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