

St Paul's Steiner School

1 St Paul's Road, Islington, London N1 2QH

Inspection dates

26 to 28 March 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- All leaders, including the trustees, have an accurate view of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve.
- Pupils' personal and social development is outstanding. Pupils play and work together positively, peacefully and productively.
- Leaders' positive impact on the quality of the curriculum can be seen in the depth of pupils' knowledge in a wide range of subjects.
- Children in the early years make a good start to school life. They are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- Teachers encourage pupils to produce high-quality work by tapping into their interests and curiosities.
- Teaching throughout the school builds well on pupils' prior learning and skills. However, on occasions when teachers do not make good use of assessment information, this has an effect on some pupils' progress.
- Pupils' behaviour towards each other and adults, and their attitudes to their learning, are exemplary. However, their attendance is below average.

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?

- Teachers should use assessment information consistently to build on pupils' prior learning, knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders should increase attendance rates to at least those seen nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards and the statutory requirements for the early years foundation stage.
- The trustees are ambitious for the school. This ambition can be seen in their determination to bring about changes in the leadership structure. These changes enable them to hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance and drive further improvements.
- There are secure plans to appoint a headteacher in September 2019. In the meantime, an interim team leader with similar responsibilities to those of a headteacher was appointed in January 2019. The team leader has hit the ground running, working effectively with the educational coordinator, who is an experienced Steiner practitioner. This teamwork has brought about clarity to the leadership and management structure of the school. Consequently, the work of the school is effectively monitored and parents are clear about who to contact should they have concerns.
- Some members of the College of Teachers act as middle leaders. They have responsibilities for checking the work of pupils and ensuring that the quality of teaching remains of good quality. These responsibilities are still being developed, but there is already an improving picture regarding teachers' use of pupils' prior learning to plan challenging work. Leaders agree that there is more to be done in this area.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in British society. The school's 'diversity group' has developed a range of resources and activities to promote pupils' respect for all people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. All staff encourage and support pupils to work well together. Pupils have a good awareness of different cultures. For example, a local Rabbi came to speak with pupils about his faith and work. Pupils also learn about different festivals, including Diwali and Chinese New Year.
- Cultural development is a strong element within the school. Music, eurhythmy, drama and art are intrinsic aspects of pupils' learning. Some stunning portraits by pupils, inspired by the work of Van Gogh, are on display. Pupils' individual talents are celebrated and encouraged. For example, during the inspection pupils were playing the piano and violin to a very high standard.
- The curriculum is enriched further by numerous visits to the theatre, concerts and field trips to a range of outdoor field study centres. While the inspection was taking place, older pupils were at a residential outdoor pursuit centre.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well as the result of effective leadership.

Governance

- Trustees hold senior leaders to account well. They attend regular meetings at the school as well as making checks on the quality of provision.
- Trustees have invested a significant amount of time and resources to improve the school and have sound plans for its further development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff and trustees take safeguarding very seriously. The safeguarding policy is fit for purpose and is published on the school's website. All staff have received up-to-date training to keep children safe, following the current statutory guidance. Trustees have undertaken the safer recruitment training.
- Staff checks are diligently recorded on the school's register and checked by the trustee responsible for safeguarding.
- Links with the local authority and other appropriate agencies to protect children are strong and effective. Staff attend regular safeguarding supervision led by the local authority.
- The historic grade 2 listed building is well maintained and looked after to ensure pupils' safety and care.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the online survey said that their children were kept safe by the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and, as a result, pupils are provided with interesting lesson content. For example, in a science lesson, pupils' study of vibration and sound was enhanced by creative links to their understanding of pitch in music.
- Subject specialists teach French, music and eurhythmics to a high standard. Pupils speak and perform with confidence and enjoyment.
- Mathematics is taught well. Pupils enjoy problem-solving. Teachers are effective in challenging misconceptions and mistakes in order to remove barriers to pupils' progress.
- Older pupils demonstrate a high degree of understanding of complex literature. For example, they explained the meaning of 'soliloquy' to an inspector.
- Most teaching uses assessment information well to plan work that challenges pupils. From time to time, however, pupils' prior learning is not taken into account and the work set offers little challenge or development of skills. This was particularly notable in some teaching of younger pupils.
- Pupils behave well in lessons because teachers set high expectations. Pupils respond well to questions and challenges. For example, pupils were observed enjoying reflective discussions of the life and work of Van Gogh.
- Pupils with SEND are supported well during lessons. Their progress from their starting points is similar to that of their peers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very confident, thoughtful and articulate learners. They work together extremely well in lessons. They enjoy discussing their learning and were happy to explain different topics to inspectors.
- Pupils are willing to take on different responsibilities and help around the school. They have raised funds for different charities.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep safe in different situations. Although computer technology does not feature largely in their school work, pupils are well aware of e-safety strategies and of how to be safe outside school.
- Leaders promote a calm and productive atmosphere. Pupils are always encouraged to think of others. For example, during playtimes and physical education (PE) lessons, the school uses a public square, and pupils demonstrate consideration towards the local residents and are not over-boisterous or noisy.
- In lessons and around the school, pupils demonstrate high levels of respect towards each other and towards adults. They listen to each other and politely respond to questions.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are absorbed in their work and demonstrate high levels of concentration. This is particularly seen while pupils draw, paint and write.
- Pupils treat each other and adults with respect. The school's records show that poor behaviour is very rare, and so, too, is bullying. Parents' and pupils' responses to the inspection surveys support this view.
- Although pupils enjoy coming to school, their attendance is below the national average. Since the team leader has focused on encouraging parents to ensure that their children attend and arrive on time, there has been some improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils develop into confident learners, making good progress across a wide range of subjects and preparing them well for the next stage of their secondary education. Some former pupils explained to inspectors how the confidence and skills they had developed in their approach to learning had helped them settle into their GCSE and A-level courses.
- Following pre-literacy in Kindergarten, pupils' reading skills develop rapidly through the school. Readers demonstrated enthusiasm for literature and fluency and deep understanding of the stories they were reading.
- Also following on from Kindergarten, pupils' writing skills blossom. Pupils' 'main lesson books' are full of well-presented work of a very high quality. This includes creative writing and research projects for different subjects, including science, history and geography.

- Pupils' mathematical skills progress well throughout the school. Pupils confidently calculate and solve problems. For example, middle school pupils were observed demonstrating their good understanding of how to multiply fractions by explaining their reasoning.
- Pupils' progress in different subjects can be seen in their 'main lesson books'. Detailed written information is supported by beautifully drawn illustrations and carefully researched dates and details.
- In art, pupils' skills develop to a very high level over their time in the school. Their skills are also highly developed in woodwork lessons, and they have opportunities to design and create a range of artefacts, including musical instruments.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have ensured that all the relevant statutory requirements are met. There is strong attention paid to children's welfare, health and safety. Staff are trained in paediatric first aid and all staff are aware of safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Links between staff and parents are very strong. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with their children's learning and development.
- Leaders ensure that children have a happy and secure start to their school life. Children are encouraged to be inquisitive about their environments and are confident explorers of different materials. There was real excitement when they planted 'seed bombs'.
- Children enjoy listening to and telling stories. They become patient listeners and articulate speakers from an early age.
- Children with SEND are well supported, which enables them to make secure progress in their learning and social development.
- Leaders are well informed and undertake a wide range of observations of children in order to check their progress. This information is used to good effect to provide parents with updates on their children's personal, social and emotional developments.
- Children's behaviour is good. They cooperate well in different activities and get on well with each other.
- The learning environment is well resourced and safe. Children know how to behave safely when using the outdoor learning area.
- By the time children leave the Kindergarten, they are ready for the next stage in their education.

School details

Unique reference number	131362
DfE registration number	206/6379
Inspection number	10094401

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 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Proprietor	James Macdonald Wright
Chair	James Macdonald Wright
Headteacher	Simon Birch
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,385–£9,260
Telephone number	020 7226 4454
Website	www.stpaulssteinerschool.org
Email address	SchoolOffice@stpaulssteinerschool.org
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2007

Information about this school

- St Paul's Steiner School is an independent co-educational day school registered for pupils aged between three and 14 years.
- The school is in a grade 2 listed church building in the London Borough of Islington.
- The interim team leader took up post in January 2019. He is supported by the educational coordinator.
- The Kindergarten classes, for children from three to six years of age, follow the early years foundation stage curriculum, with agreed exemptions from the Department for Education. The early years provision is exempt from teaching phonics, some elements of mathematics and technology.

- There are 38 pupils identified with SEND.
- No pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- No alternative provision is used by the school.
- The school was last inspected in July 2016 by the school inspection service. The overall judgement was 'good'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the team leader, educational coordinator and other members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with four of the trustees, including the chair of trustees, who is also the proprietor. Inspectors met with different groups of pupils and the school's adviser.
- A series of observations took place in classrooms, in the nearby square during breaktime and in a PE lesson. A performance assembly was also observed. Senior leaders accompanied inspectors on many of these observations.
- Inspectors reviewed 145 parental responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, 22 responses from staff and 60 from pupils.
- The lead inspector met with a group of parents during the school's regular coffee morning meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness, attendance information, safeguarding and child protection records and a range of school policies.
- The last Ofsted inspection took place in July 2007.

Inspection team

John Seal, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sean Flood

Ofsted Inspector

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