

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools in association with the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship

ADVICE TO THE DfE FOLLOWING A REQUESTED VISIT TO A STEINER ASSOCIATED SCHOOL IN ENGLAND

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of the school: NORWICH STEINER SCHOOL

Address of the school: Hospital Lane, Lakenham, Norwich, NR1 2HW

Telephone number: 01603 611175

Email address: info@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk

Proprietor: Norwich Steiner School

Name of Administrator: Sandie Tolhurst

Name of Chair of College: Sarah Higgins

School DfE number: 926/6154

Age range and gender of pupils:

Number on roll (Full time)	Boys: 25	Girls: 24	Total: 49
	(Part time) Boys:	Girls:	Total:

Number of pupils with statement of special educational need: Boys: 2 Girls: 0

Date of visit: Wednesday, 9th November 2011

Reporting inspector: Simon Bennett

Date recommended for next visit: Normal inspection cycle

CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL AND INSPECTION

The Norwich Steiner School is a non-selective independent co-educational day school for pupils, aged from three to fourteen, situated in the Lakenham area of Norwich. The school was founded in 2005 in order to provide an education based on the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. The school follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and its system for the organisation of classes. There is an emphasis on the development of social skills and creativity. The school aims to produce able young people with a strong sense of self and purpose.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

The visit took place at the request of the DfE as a consequence of publicity arising in the national press as a result of a court action taken against the school which implied some issues to do with the welfare of children. The inspection was conducted by one SIS inspector, who had not been involved in the previous inspection. The visit was for one day only, and no notice was given to the school beforehand. The purpose was to check that the school's policies and procedures relating to the welfare and safeguarding of children were in place and were being effectively implemented.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE VISIT

The quality of education provided by the school

As noted at the last full inspection, the school provides a good education for its pupils. They are well cared for and the school is clearly successful in achieving its key aims. The environment of the school is secure, and risk assessments are in place. Relationships between teachers and pupils continue to be good and are often excellent. Problems had arisen from the inability of one or two members of staff to work harmoniously together, but this problem has been resolved.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school continues to place great importance on this aspect of the pupils' education, and this was borne out by the conduct of the pupils at the time of this visit.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school continues to place strong emphasis on this aspect of its provision. At the time of the last inspection, most areas of welfare, health and safety were reported to be excellent, but risk assessment records for trips and visits lacked sharp focus on particular situations relating to higher risk and to contingency planning. These areas have now been strengthened, and risk assessments, which are detailed, relevant and on-going, are in place. Premises and accommodation are of high standards. Inset days have been provided to ensure that relevant areas of training are covered thoroughly for all staff in order to enable them to ensure that children's welfare is paramount. All relevant health and safety requirements, including fire safety, continue to be met. Pupils are well supervised, and staff are trained in first-aid. The encouragement of healthy living is provided both theoretically and in practice. The registers meet all requirements.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The central register is in order, and all checks are carried out thoroughly.

Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is situated in a well-maintained building; it has spacious rooms and has been decorated to a high standard. The grounds are extensive and secure and are kept clean and tidy. Facilities for pupils who are ill are satisfactory, and there is good access for emergency evacuation.

The quality of information provided to parents and carers

Parents have remained very supported of the school and appreciate the quality of communication. The administrator and other members of staff are wholly committed to the interests of the pupils.

INSPECTOR'S SUMMARY

The court case has obviously been a difficult experience for all those at the school and has not been without its cost in every sense of the word. The lessons learned from the experience, which had engendered a sense of injustice, were principally founded on an awareness of the need to identify issues of internal communication at an early stage and that all relevant details which arise should be recorded meticulously. The school has worked to strengthen the membership of its body of trustees in terms of experience, and to supplement this by looking strengthening good practice in the classroom by more thorough appraisal methods and by establishing more effective ways of disseminating good practice. The school is aware that this is difficult when the staff is small and their time is fully occupied. There has been a tremendous burden of work on the administrator, and the school has been defining more clearly the responsibilities of those in managerial positions. All relevant policies are in place, but there has been no systematic method of ensuring that they are consistently reviewed and revised in a way which indicates timelines and responsibility. The school is also developing its approach to self-evaluation, and sees this as a constructive approach. It has established very strong relations with local social services and safeguarding personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The previous inspection recommended that the school should establish a coherent and objective appraisal system. This should continue to be a major aim of the school.
2. The school should aim to broaden the areas of expertise among its trustees.
3. The school is advised to establish a systematic procedure for the updating of all the documents relevant to the welfare of children, ensuring that each document is dated and that there is a central list which indicates the time for review and the person responsible for conducting it.

NOTES FOR FUTURE VISITS

The next inspection should be part of the normal cycle. The school has quite clearly learned the lessons from its recent experience and is determined to ensure that it continues to place the welfare of its children at the centre of all that it does.