

Steiner Academy Bristol

Oldbury Court Road, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 2JP

Inspection dates

17–18 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make similar progress to their peers in some subjects.
- Some teachers do not consistently match work to the needs of pupils.
- Some pupils do not demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to learning across their various subjects.
- Some recent positive changes to leadership and provision have not had enough time to become established and show impact.
- Time is not always well used to ensure pupils make rapid progress.
- Not all pupils are punctual to lessons.
- Attendance overall and for different groups of pupils is too low. Too many pupils are persistently absent.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve or of their behaviour.
- Exclusions are above average as a result of the school's efforts to challenge poor behaviour.
- A minority of parents are not satisfied with aspects of the school's work and the quality of communication with leaders and governors.
- Middle leadership is not yet having sufficient impact in helping to improve the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors are taking the right action to improve aspects of the school's work, such as teaching, assessment and behaviour.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved so that pupils are now in a position to make better progress.
- The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well.
- Leaders are taking advantage of the support they receive from external advisers to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Positive relationships, based on mutual respect, exist between staff and pupils.
- Provision in the early years is good.
- The Steiner ethos and curriculum develop pupils' craft skills, imagination and creativity.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, and raise achievement, particularly for pupils in the upper years, by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently plan work and activities that meet the different needs of pupils
 - staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the most able in core subjects
 - staff have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour
 - teachers use time more effectively so that pupils make more rapid progress
 - provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is developed further to enable pupils to make better academic progress.
- Improve behaviour by ensuring that:
 - the behaviour system is used to best effect to reduce the number of exclusions
 - staff continue to work closely with parents and external agencies to reduce absence
 - all pupils are punctual to lessons.
- Improve the quality of leadership by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors engage more effectively with those parents who are dissatisfied with aspects of the school's work
 - middle leadership is fully developed to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders' efforts to ensure that pupils achieve as highly as they should are hampered by the school's unusual context and circumstances. This is because the school is still in its infancy, growing at a rapid rate and still in the process of defining its identity. Leaders are having to reshape the school so that it fulfils the Steiner ethos while meeting the needs of the pupils who attend the school. Leaders' efforts to achieve this balance are moving in the right direction but it is a 'work in progress'. Consequently, pupils in some year groups do not have as good an experience of school as others.
- Middle leadership is not yet fully developed and playing a lead role in developing aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. The principal was right to prioritise this aspect of leadership in order to lighten her own heavy workload. However, impact is currently limited because the development of middle leadership is in its early stages.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school. This means that some pupils, particularly in the upper years, are not achieving as highly as they should. This is, in part, because of the high level of staff turnover since the school's opening. Frequent changes of staff in some areas of the school have made it hard for the principal to establish consistency of expectation and practice across subjects. It is also because middle leadership, until recently, has not had a role in improving teaching.
- A minority of parents are dissatisfied with aspects of the school's work and believe that communication between school and home is not good enough. Leaders have not successfully explained to these parents why necessary management decisions have been taken and provided reassurance to this effect.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is not currently supporting pupils to make similar academic progress to their peers. However, programmes to help pupils overcome social, emotional and behavioural issues are helping to improve pupils' readiness for learning. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that funding needs to be more sharply focused in order to have the desired impact on academic progress.
- Leaders have a clear and objective understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They readily acknowledge what needs to improve and have strengthened plans for improvement so that they are sharper and tackle 'the nub' of the issue.
- The principal is taking the right action to improve the school. She has rightly acknowledged that there is a need for greater rigour in teaching, assessment and management of behaviour. To this end, supported by governors, significant changes have been made in the last 12 months, notably to increase leadership capacity. For example, the appointment of the vice-principal has been critical for improving aspects of provision. However, these changes are recent and impact is not yet fully evident.
- The quality of teaching is now improving as a result of developing middle leadership and the support provided by external advisers. These professionals are providing staff with helpful resources and training. Their expertise is also helping staff to manage behaviour within the Steiner context, and to develop accurate and robust assessment.

- Teaching is also improving because the principal has challenged underperformance and recruited teachers who are helping to raise standards.
- The school provides a varied and unique curriculum for pupils. Some components, such as art and woodwork, are rich in creativity and hands-on practical application. The Steiner philosophy of 'head, heart and hands' threads through the curriculum. As a result, pupils are given opportunities to express themselves, apply their imagination and develop craft skills. Pupils are prompted to consider the world around them, particularly the natural environment. However, English and mathematics skills are less well developed.
- Additional funding provided to help pupils who have fallen behind in Year 7 to catch up with their peers is used effectively. Funding is used to employ additional English and mathematics specialist teachers who work effectively with targeted pupils to move them on.
- Additional funding provided to support pupils' sports and physical education has been well used to develop outside sports areas. It also enables the school PE specialist to arrange a greater number of off-site activities, such as climbing, kayaking, sailing and mountain biking.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving because of the work of the vice-principal, who is also the special educational needs coordinator. Additional funding for these pupils is successfully helping her to provide a greater range of strategies to support a diverse range of complex needs. For example, programmes are in place to support dyslexia, and speech and language issues. The school 'therapy dog' helps pupils develop confidence and self-esteem. The vice-principal is involving external agencies more closely in support of certain pupils than was previously the case.
- The majority of parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, agree that their child is safe and well looked after. The majority of parents would recommend the school. However, a sizeable proportion of respondents did not agree that the school is well led and managed.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to their work and passionately believe in the importance of the Steiner philosophy. However, they have not successfully persuaded all parents that decisions taken to improve aspects of the school's work, while retaining the school's distinct ethos, are the right ones.
- The principal and other senior leaders are increasingly held to account by governors. They ask challenging questions which draw attention to key areas for development. This approach has helped leaders to draw up sharper plans for improvement. Consequently, in the last 12 months, some key changes for the better have been introduced. They are recent, however, and some are yet to bear fruit.
- Governors provide the principal with the support she needs to make key improvements, some of which have been contentious and not wholly supported by some members of the school community. They are necessary nonetheless.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Certain safeguarding procedures have been tightened up since the appointment of the vice-principal. The introduction of an online system has introduced greater rigour to the recording of referrals for pupils causing concern. The system captures the necessary detail for each referral and organises them chronologically. The relevant staff are alerted to take action when required. The vice-principal, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, monitors all referrals closely. She meets on a weekly basis with all other staff responsible for safeguarding to discuss ongoing concerns and to ensure that the appropriate action is being taken.
- All staff have been appropriately trained and know the procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child and need to make a referral. Local authority staff, such as the early help visitor, provide good support and work positively with school staff. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are complete and up to date.
- Leaders have taken all reasonable precautions to ensure that pupils are safe around the school site. Recent building works have posed risks which leaders have responded to appropriately. Risks have been assessed and action taken to minimise these risks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils are sometimes presented with work that fails to deepen their thinking.
- Some teachers do not consistently tailor work to the needs of pupils. As a result, work is sometimes too hard for lower-ability pupils, who are unable to access the task, or too easy for the most able. In these cases, some pupils were observed by inspectors to become bored because they finished the task quickly.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are variable. Where teaching is good, such as in woodwork or art, pupils are highly engaged. They enjoy working on their own individually tailored projects and make good use of the teacher's subject knowledge and support. Where teaching is not good, valuable learning time is often wasted. Furthermore, pupils' behaviour deteriorates when work does not meet their needs and they become bored.
- Feedback provided by some staff, in line with the school's policy and plans for improvement, does not always enable pupils to improve their work.
- The school's assessment system is increasingly enabling staff to measure pupils' progress in core skills, such as English and mathematics, accurately. Although recently introduced, as part of the principal's effort to introduce greater rigour, staff are adapting to it well. It is helping to drive up staff expectations of pupils.
- Pupils enjoy very positive relationships with staff, particularly, but not exclusively, in the lower school. These relationships are characterised by kindness and mutual respect. As a result, most pupils regard classrooms as safe spaces in which to express themselves.

- The best teaching in the school harnesses pupils' creativity, flair and imagination and marries these to a rigorous adherence to high expectations of achievement and behaviour.
- A sizeable minority of parents who responded to Parent View do not agree that they receive valuable information from the school about their child's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils lack confidence and self-esteem. This is partly because, over time, the management of behaviour by some staff has not always been effective. Consequently, some pupils, especially in the upper years, do not feel as comfortable and secure in school as they should.
- Pupils report that bullying is now being dealt with more effectively as expectations of behaviour increase and new behaviour management systems take effect.
- Some pupils do not yet have the skills to be successful learners. This is because their poor behaviour prevents them from developing appropriate attitudes to learning. The recently introduced behaviour policy and accompanying strategies are establishing higher expectations of behaviour and more rigorous monitoring of it. However, the impact of these is not yet fully evident.
- Staff are kind and caring. They treat pupils with thoughtful consideration because they want pupils to enjoy their school experience and feel that they belong. Pupils recognise and value this commitment in staff. Staff encourage pupils to be kind and thoughtful. For example, pupils in Year 4 were asked to consider, during religious studies, how they would respond to the question, 'who gives you a helping hand?'
- Provision for the growing number of pupils who have a diverse range of complex social and emotional needs is improving. Pupils' needs are being identified more quickly and systematically. Once identified, a greater range of strategies and resources, including outside agencies, are being used to support pupils.
- Pupils benefit from the Steiner curriculum, which prioritises the development of the 'whole child'. The curriculum encourages pupils to consider their humanity, and their relationship with others and the natural world around them. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their spirituality, and consider the natural rhythms and events that shape lives; for example, cultural festivals such as St Martin's Mass, Advent and Three Kings Day are studied and inform pupils' understanding of the wider cultural world.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The attendance of pupils overall and for different groups of pupils is not high enough. Moreover, too many pupils are persistently absent. This is because work to overcome

barriers to attendance and make parents more aware of its importance is not having sufficient impact. It is also because the monitoring of absence was not sharp enough until the recent appointment of the business manager, who now oversees attendance.

- The number of exclusions is too high. This is because leaders have raised expectations of pupils' behaviour and staff are being quicker to challenge unsatisfactory behaviour. Exclusions are also high, however, because recently introduced systems to manage behaviour are not yet having sufficient impact.
- Some pupils are not always punctual to school in the morning or to different lessons during the day. This significantly lessens the amount of learning time available in certain cases.
- Most pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school site. However, the conduct of pupils in the corridors is not always orderly. Some pupils were observed by inspectors to run in spaces that were too narrow or contained double doors that posed a potential hazard to running pupils.
- In many lessons pupils show respect for each other's views and ideas. They listen considerately to each other and enjoy working together.
- Pupils are respectful of the school environment. Communal spaces and classrooms celebrate pupils' high-quality work. For example, in the art room, pupils' autumn tree watercolour paintings, clay sculptures and cyanotypes were on display. Pupils respond positively to these vibrant, dynamic examples of their peers' work and treat them respectfully.
- Pupils respond well to the opportunities they have to engage with craft activities. These include making items such as wooden stools and spoons, or making slippers using traditional tools and methods. Pupils' finished articles show, through the quality of the work, their commitment, dedication and resilience.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils in different year groups, particularly the most able, do not make sufficient progress in mathematics. This is because pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. To a lesser degree, pupils also need to make more rapid progress in the development of certain English and science skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, do not currently make as much progress as their peers. This is also the case for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the school's progress information indicates that the differences are diminishing, albeit not quickly enough.
- The 'main lesson', which begins the day and focuses learning on a particular topic over a period of time, does not always enable pupils to deepen their knowledge sufficiently across different subjects. It is for this reason that the principal has provided supplementary sessions in core subjects.
- Pupils' progress is not as rapid as it otherwise would be in some year groups because it has been hampered by changes in staffing. Some pupils report that they sometimes unnecessarily repeat work that has already been covered. This prevents them from 'striding ahead' and making the progress of which they are capable.

- Some pupils, particularly the most able, produce high-quality work in certain subjects, depending on the year group, when they choose to rise to the challenge. Where this is the case, pupils weave together knowledge and skills from different subjects and produce highly individualised, imaginative pieces. The pride they take in this work is evident.
- Pupils' reading skills are developing because a more systematic approach to the teaching of reading has been introduced. The principal believes strongly that pupils should have access to books that will encourage them to read. As a result, she is ensuring that the library is able to offer reading material that is suitable for a wide range of abilities and interests.
- Pupils in some year groups are being well prepared for the next stage of their education, although not all. Children in the kindergarten are well prepared for the years that follow. Additionally, the largely positive experience of pupils in the lower school is providing them with a solid foundation on which to build. However, the experience of some pupils in the upper years is not preparing them sufficiently for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the kindergarten make good progress in various aspects of their social and emotional development. This is because children respond positively to the opportunities for learning that are provided.
- The kindergarten coordinator brings passion and commitment to her work. She has a clear and accurate picture of the provision's strengths and weaknesses. She has used this understanding to introduce changes which have improved the provision, particularly in recent months. However, it is too early to measure the impact of some changes.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils interact well and show respect to each other and to adults. They follow the teacher's instructions promptly and quietly. For example, during breaktime children were asked to sit and eat their snacks quietly, in an act of reverence. Pupils did as they were asked to and when, after 10 minutes, they were asked to share their news, they responded in an equally appropriate fashion. In the past, behaviour has not been good. However, effective use of behaviour management strategies, such as the 'well-being room', have helped to improve behaviour.
- Although children make good progress, they are not always able to take full advantage of learning opportunities. Sometimes this is because children do not arrive at school punctually. On other occasions, teaching does not encourage children to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Children undertake a broad range of activities, many of which are outside. These help develop different aspects of their development. In keeping with the Steiner ethos, there is an emphasis on children using their hands to make and create, which they do successfully.
- The kindergarten coordinator has established effective links with parents and other professionals. She reassures parents that children experience the Steiner approach to schooling, underpinned by appropriate rigour and a focus on high standards. The coordinator has also worked closely with staff from the feeder nursery to ensure that transition to school is smooth.

School details

Unique reference number	141108
Local authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	10024909

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Ellis-Jones
Principal	Angela Browne
Telephone number	0117 965 9150
Website	www.steineracademybristol.org.uk
Email address	info@steineracademybristol.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The principal has been in post since the school opened in 2014.
- The vice-principal took up post in November 2016.
- Steiner Academy Bristol is currently a smaller than average all-through school because the school is still in the process of recruiting pupils to fill the different year groups. The most recent contextual information for the school is already out of date because a large number of pupils have joined the school in the last academic year. The school is continuing to grow.

- The most recent published contextual information indicates that the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The most recent published contextual information indicates that the number of girls in the school is higher than average.
- The most recent published contextual information indicates that the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. However, the school's own more recent information indicates that the proportion of eligible children is now above average.
- The most recent published contextual information indicates that the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and a statement of special educational needs or an education, health or care plan is just below average.
- The most recent published contextual information indicates that the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who receive support is below the national average. However, the school's own more recent information indicates that the proportion of eligible children is now above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the principal, vice-principal, the kindergarten coordinator and the business manager. Additionally, inspectors had discussions with pupils, representatives of the governing body, parents and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, governing body minutes, progress information and notes of visit from external consultants. In addition, attendance, exclusion and behaviour information was considered. Safeguarding records were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work from different year groups and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Wigley	Ofsted Inspector
David New	Ofsted Inspector

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