

Beechtree Steiner Initiative

192a Chapeltown Road, Leeds LS7 4HZ

Inspection dates

12–14 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The trustees and other members of staff have not ensured that all of the independent school standards have been met. As a result, the quality of leadership and management requires improvement overall.
- The system for recording whole-school fire evacuations is not sufficiently robust. As a result, although they have been undertaken, it is not possible to evaluate their effectiveness or when they have taken place.
- At the time of the inspection, most areas within the school were well ordered. However, storage in the main hall, of equipment belonging to the landlord, posed a small risk to children playing.
- Many of the school trustees are newly appointed to their roles. Trustees are already clear about many of their duties, such as ensuring school spending remains within budget. However, they are less clear about their role in holding school staff to account for the progress children and pupils make in school.
- Older pupils make strong progress in mathematics and writing. However, some of the most able pupils are keen to make faster progress in reading than they are currently.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the school's Kindergarten provision make good progress from a range of starting points.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good because staff plan learning that meets the needs of most pupils well.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy coming to school. This is clearly reflected in their good attendance and punctuality.
- The principal manager, staff and trustees have a clear vision for the future of the school. They are taking effective steps to bring about improvement.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading by giving older pupils more opportunities to develop their reading skills.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing the role trustees play in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and the progress of pupils
 - ensuring that the fire regulatory requirements outlined in the independent school standards are adhered to
 - making sure that the storage of spare equipment in school poses no hazard to pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school trustees, principal manager and staff have not ensured that all the required independent school standards have been met.
- The trustees, principal manager and staff have put in place a health and safety policy that clearly identifies risk. Daily tick sheets are diligently completed. However, while the sheets identify the main areas of risk, they do not always identify minor areas of risk as carefully as they should. For example, staff ensure that fire doors are easily accessible on the inside of the building. However, staff do not always check the escape route for hazards such as discarded rubbish which may pose a trip hazard. Similarly, irregularly stacked tables were not noted as a minor hazard in the hall.
- The school is led and managed using a cooperative approach. Staff, trustees and the principal manager often work closely together when making decisions within the school. This approach ensures that staff feel directly involved in the running of the school and has contributed to the shared vision of continuous improvement within the school.
- The curriculum delivered within the school is based on the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. This approach enables pupils to learn at their own pace and uses stories to develop different learning points. Parents and carers spoken to during the inspection described this style as being unhurried and felt that it gave their children opportunities to learn and develop without external pressure. Parents also commented that they felt this approach supported pupils' mental health.
- Staff regularly track and monitor pupils' progress in both the early years Kindergarten classes and in Class One. Systems in place are rigorous and are based on developing a sound understanding of each individual pupil's academic, social and emotional progress. Work in older pupils' books shows that they are making good progress over time.
- The school is situated in the grounds of a Sikh temple. Visits to the temple offer pupils unique opportunities to gain an understanding of a different culture and religion at first hand. Pupils learn the importance of contributing to the community from an early age. For example, children in the Kindergarten classes help prepare vegetables for lunch. As one child commented, this does not include butternut squash 'because its skin is just too hard and knobbly for us to peel'. These activities, combined with regular litter-picking activities in the school locality, enable pupils to gain an understanding of British values and contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of all pupils.

Governance

- The chair of the trustees has put in place a clear structure for governance. Trustees have clear roles and responsibilities including, for example, financial management. Their roles are aligned carefully with their skills and knowledge. However, after the recent departure of a trustee, the responsibility for holding staff to account for the quality of teaching and learning and for pupils' progress has not been carried out. A further trustee, who it is planned will take up this role, is in the process of being inducted on to the board of trustees.
- Trustees take a keen interest in the running of the school. Several are parents, who also

volunteer in the school. This enables them to have a detailed understanding of how the school works. Trustees feel that this enables them to carry out their role more effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The trustees and principal manager have ensured that the safeguarding policy is displayed on the school website. The policy is clearly written and meets all requirements of the independent school standards.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training and are clear about what actions to take should a concern be raised. The close monitoring of entry and exit to the school building, alongside staff vigilance, demonstrates the school's strong culture of safeguarding.
- Safeguarding files are stored safely and securely. Analysis of files during the inspection showed that information is stored in chronological order and that school staff worked closely and effectively with other professionals to support the needs of pupils and their families.
- Despite not using information technology hardware in school, pupils are taught internet safety. Staff are aware that pupils may have access to 'screens' at home and are keen to ensure that they understand how to keep safe when using computers and smart phones.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and learning within the school are based on the staff's knowledge of pupils' needs. Learning is delivered through the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and is tightly based on the individual needs of pupils.
- Teachers in the school are all Steiner accredited. Most also hold qualified teacher status. All have a well-developed understanding of how pupils learn and develop, and work closely with support staff to plan and deliver an effective curriculum.
- In early years, children learn through play. In preparation for transition to a different approach to learning, older children join the 'Bud' class for sessions in the final term of the year in which they are six. This enables pupils to learn the important skills of sitting and listening, as well as preparing them for a more formalised style of teaching and learning.
- Older pupils learn to write before they begin to read. Initially pupils learn to write using capital letters before developing their skills in joined-up letters. At the time of the inspection, pupils were not yet using cursive script, but had well-developed writing skills. Work in books demonstrated clearly the strong progress each pupil had made from their individual starting point.
- Reading is introduced to pupils at a later stage than writing. Phonics is taught and letter sounds are practised frequently by all pupils in readiness for reading. At the time of the inspection, the teacher felt that pupils were not quite ready to start. However, pupils disagreed, saying that they felt that they were not sufficiently challenged by just learning letter sounds and that they wanted to learn to read whole books now.
- Staff tell stories around a theme. These stories engage pupils and enable them to develop

understanding in a variety of different curriculum areas. For example, Class One pupils were learning about the behaviour of the cuckoo through a story told by their teacher. Carefully woven through the story was the scientific concept of survival of the fittest, coupled with the development of pupils' listening, writing and questioning skills.

- Physical education (PE) is delivered in the local park. Pupils, accompanied by staff, learn how to take turns and develop their gross motor skills through running, hopping, skipping and jumping. Pupils spoken to described PE lessons as 'the best time of the week'. Pupils' enjoyment, coupled with their confident and agile movements when playing games, demonstrated well the good progress made by pupils in this subject.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' good levels of self-confidence and self-awareness are clearly evident in their attitudes to learning. For example, several pupils were new to English when they joined the school. The happy and confident way pupils spoke to both the inspector and their peers and teachers reflects well the gains they have made since joining the school.
- When pupils join the school, staff carry out checks on their personal well-being (happiness and engagement) as well as their academic knowledge and skills. These checks are seen by school staff as essential for gaining an understanding of the needs of the whole child. This approach demonstrates clearly the school's close focus on developing pupils' personal development and well-being.
- Pupils are taught from a very early age to be independent. For example, pupils in the Bud group were observed buttering their own oatcakes and preparing their own fruit kebabs by threading fruit onto skewers. Their dexterity and confidence were impressive, as were their mature attitudes to sharing resources.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well both inside and outside the classroom. Despite their young age, they have developed a sense of responsibility for each other and are polite to staff and visitors.
- Pupils are nearly always attentive in lessons and are keen to learn. As a result, learning is very rarely interrupted by incidents of difficult behaviour.
- The school has not had cause to exclude any pupils since it opened in September 2017. Behavioural incidents are effectively logged and analysed. Effective action is taken if a child's behaviour becomes a cause for concern. For example, in discussion with the school special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), an extra member of the support staff may be moved to a classroom to offer extra adult time to a child.
- Attendance is very close to the national average for pupils of a similar age. In some classes, attendance stands at 100% for the year, evidencing pupils' own view that school is a happy place to be.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils who attend the school do not take national tests or national screening. Therefore, comparisons with other pupils nationally are not possible.
- However, staff do measure pupils' progress and achievement carefully against targets set within the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Teachers keep meticulous assessment notes and are very clear about how much progress pupils are making.
- Overall, pupils make stronger progress in mathematics and writing than reading. Staff are aware that pupils need more opportunities to develop reading skills overall.
- Pupils whose learning is causing concern are often referred to the SENCo, who works within the school on a part-time basis. Support is put in place to enable pupils to overcome their difficulties, or referrals are made to outside agencies. As a result, pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make similar progress to others in the school.
- The school does not receive additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and so does not recognise this group. However, extra support is provided for pupils whose progress dips, so that they can catch up with their peers.

Early years provision

Good

- Children who attend the early years provision are exempt from reporting on the literacy and numeracy elements of the early years foundation stage assessments. However, staff carry out regular checks on children's development when they start school.
- Checks show that children start the school with skills and knowledge typical for their age. Further checks, carried out at the end of children's time in the Kindergarten classes, show that they make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Children's good levels of progress, combined with the extra input given to children who are transferring, ensures that they are well prepared when they transfer to Class One.
- Classes alternate between indoor play and the outdoor provision whatever the weather. Waterproof suits and warm clothing ensure that they remain warm and comfortable in the winter. Sunhats and sunscreen applied by staff ensure that they are well protected in the summer.
- Teachers ensure that opportunities for learning through play are interesting and exciting. For example, children spoken to said how much they enjoyed playing outside on the mud mountain, using their imagination to create 'food' from mud. Children were also observed spinning with watering cans and exploring the different patterns on the ground.
- Activities are designed to promote imaginative play and develop children's independence. These objectives could clearly be observed at the time of the inspection as children played calmly and happily with little adult support or intervention.
- All resources are made from natural materials, and activities such as knitting with wool and playing with sticks enable children to appreciate the natural world.
- Leaders, managers and staff ensure that all welfare standards are met within the Kindergarten provision.

School details

Unique reference number	144620
DfE registration number	383/6005
Inspection number	10046958

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	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Beechtree Steiner Initiative
Chair	Phil Toepritz
Principal manager	Cath Thurlow
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,061.22
Telephone number	0113 345 5858
Website	www.leeds-steiner.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@leeds-steiner.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is registered to meet the needs of 80 children between the ages of two and nine years old.
- In September 2017, the school moved to its current address and opened as Beechtree Steiner Initiative, offering Steiner Waldorf education.
- The school currently has 46 children on roll, with 41 children attending the Kindergarten provision and five older pupils in Class One.
- Parent volunteers work across the school alongside teachers and support staff.

- The school also runs parent and children groups both inside the school and within the outdoor provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all areas of the school. The inspector also observed a PE lesson in the local park.
- Meetings were held with staff, leaders, trustees and pupils. Informal discussions were held with two parents.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including safeguarding documents, curriculum planning and health and safety documents.
- The inspector considered 22 responses received via Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and six responses from members of staff, when making inspection judgements.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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