

Bristol Steiner School

Redland Hill House, Redland Hill, Bristol BS6 6UX

Inspection dates

26–28 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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since her appointment in January 2018, the headteacher has led a relentless drive to raise academic standards across the school. She has been supported successfully by a team of committed, dedicated and skilled leaders and staff.
- Across the school, pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are good. From their different starting points, pupils make strong progress through the school's curriculum. Consequently, pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- While they remain good, the mathematics outcomes for older pupils are not as strong as in English.
- Teachers, and other staff, know their pupils well. They have a clear understanding of what pupils understand and can do. They use this information to plan logical sequences of learning which further develop pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Leaders have worked tirelessly to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence and lateness. Although much improved, attendance rates remain slightly below the national averages.
- In the early years, children achieve well through the school's kindergarten curriculum.
- Pupils feel safe and are confident that the actions of staff will keep them so while they are in school. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. Every parent who spoke with inspectors stated that they would recommend the school to other parents.
- Members of the board of trustees maintain a clear oversight of the school. Their bold and proactive actions have proved instrumental in securing important changes. Trustees' evaluations of the school are accurate, but they recognise that school improvement planning would benefit from greater levels of precision.
- Trustees have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards. However, they have not put secure enough systems in place to check and monitor continued compliance with statutory requirements.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective.

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?

- Further improve outcomes in mathematics by ensuring that teachers regularly provide pupils with opportunities to apply their mathematical understanding across all areas of the mathematics curriculum.
- Continue to work with parents to improve attendance and further reduce persistent lateness.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - targets in the school development plan have precise success criteria focusing on pupil outcomes, which are evaluated for their impact
 - trustees develop robust monitoring systems to check continued compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment in January 2018, the headteacher has led the school through a period of continued improvement. She has refocused the school's vision, so there is now a greater emphasis on ensuring that all pupils in the school make the academic progress of which they are capable. However, while doing this, she has also maintained the school's Steiner philosophy and ethos. As a result, pupils' outcomes and their personal development are equally strong.
- The headteacher is supported in her leadership of the school by a skilled and dedicated team of leaders. Together, they lead by example, demonstrating the high expectations that they hold for all members of the school's community. Consequently, pupils receive a good education and all of the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher has implemented a robust assessment system which records and tracks pupils' attainment and progress against the school's curriculum aims. This new framework has raised expectations and added clarity to teachers' planning and, consequently, their teaching. The school's assessment procedures are underpinned by focused discussions about the performance of individual pupils. This is allowing leaders and staff to intervene swiftly if specific pupils are identified as not making the progress expected of them.
- Leaders use a carefully structured programme of monitoring to evaluate the quality of teaching. They hold staff to account for the impact that their teaching is having on pupils' pastoral and academic outcomes. Where performance falls below the expected standards, leaders act swiftly and decisively in providing members of staff with the challenge and support they require. Leaders' high expectations and the increased accountability have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all phases of the school.
- Leaders make effective use of continuing professional development based on teachers' individual needs. This has helped to develop staff expertise and confidence. Where appropriate, leaders have looked outside the school to identify and share best practice with other local schools and further education settings.
- While bringing about significant and rapid change, the headteacher has kept staff informed and involved. This has been appreciated by the staff and, consequently, their morale is high. As one member of staff wrote in their staff survey: 'In her short time here, the headteacher has made a significant improvement in the working culture of the school. She provides excellent leadership, brings out the best in people, and is effective at managing much-needed change, while preserving the essential nature of Steiner education.'
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring further improvement. They have developed an effective system for evaluating the school's performance and use this information to inform school development planning. However, leaders' evaluations of the school's performance and the improvement plan are overly descriptive and do not focus sufficiently on the impact that actions are having. Additionally, success criteria lack the level of precision required to enable leaders to hold staff fully to account for the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.
- The leadership of special educational needs is effective and results in pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) making strong progress from their starting

points. The special educational needs coordinator has a thorough knowledge of pupils' additional needs and the barriers that they face in their learning. Learning in classes is supplemented with intervention programmes tailored to meet pupils' needs.

- Leaders have ensured that the school's curriculum is meeting the needs of pupils in the school. They have written a bespoke curriculum for the school which fulfils the requirements of a Steiner school while preparing pupils for the next stage of their education. The school's curriculum is rooted in a clear intent and rationale. It is implemented consistently throughout the school with a focus on developing pupils' 'emotional, physical and intellectual life'. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils get a range of experiences and achieve well, across a variety of subjects. Where leaders have identified potential gaps in older pupils' conceptual knowledge, for example in science, detailed transitional plans are in place to ensure that pupils move on to their new schools with the necessary skills and understanding.
- Leaders place a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of values. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of diversity, both within the school and within modern Britain, and understand the importance of treating everyone equally and fairly. Leaders' promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. All parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire stated that they would recommend the school to other parents. One parent, summing up the views of many others, wrote: 'My daughter is thriving at school and very happy both socially and academically. She is stretched appropriately and carries out a range of valuable activities. Her confidence has grown since attending this school, and the school ensures that she is able to explore different types of learning in a safe environment.' Another parent stated that 'This is a fantastic school with a passionate leadership team that cares for each and every child. The teachers go above and beyond to make every child feel happy, safe and inspired learners.'

Governance

- The trustees' decisive actions have been a significant factor in the school's improvement journey. Having previously identified a weakness in the leadership and management of the school, they restructured the school's leadership arrangements and ensured that there was a significant focus on raising academic standards. These actions, and the subsequent appointment of the current headteacher, demonstrate effective governance.
- The board of trustees has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas which require further improvement. Board members are active participants and use their time in school to gather a wide range of first-hand evidence about the school's performance. They hold school leaders to account for their actions but realise that a lack of precision in the school's development planning is preventing them from doing this with the highest levels of rigour.
- During the inspection, there were two minor areas in which the school's premises were not fully compliant with the independent school standards. Although these were rectified during the inspection, trustees recognise that systems to monitor continued compliance with the standards are not sufficiently robust.

Safeguarding

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Throughout the school, there is a strong and proactive culture of safeguarding. Leaders and staff know their pupils well and have a secure understanding of their responsibility for keeping children safe.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has a secure understanding of statutory requirements. She has ensured that staff training is appropriate and up to date. As a result, staff talk knowledgeably about the school's policies and the procedures they would follow should they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being.
- The school's recruitment procedures are in line with statutory requirements. Leaders routinely carry out the checks necessary to ensure that new staff are suitable to work with children. There are appropriate procedures in place to record these recruitment checks and the training that staff have received.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets current requirements and is published on the school's website.
- The school works effectively with a range of external agencies to support pupils' needs. Where necessary, safeguarding referrals are made within an appropriate time frame and followed up where an unsatisfactory response is received. The school also works with external providers to share information about staying safe. For example, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has visited the school to talk to pupils and their parents about online safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers, and other teaching staff, know their pupils well, both personally and academically. They foster strong relationships, built on mutual respect, that help pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers have a secure understanding of what pupils can already do and understand. They plan well-structured sequences of learning which embed previous knowledge before teaching something new. Work is appropriately matched to different pupils' needs and this enables pupils to deepen their understanding of concepts before moving on.
- Teachers demonstrate high expectations, coupled with strong subject knowledge. They understand the school's aims and the rationale supporting the approach to learning. As a result, teachers apply the school's policies and procedures consistently across the school so that pupils make good progress. For example, the school's strategy of teaching through a 'three-day rhythm' is evident in all classes.
- Teaching staff are reflective and eager to develop their own practice. They engage in professional dialogue, sharing successful practice and looking to develop new strategies to support their teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve, as do pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have introduced a new approach to the teaching of writing and this is having a demonstrable impact on the quality of pupils' work. Teachers help pupils develop technical writing skills, while at the same time exposing them to a wider range of genres and text types. Across different areas of the school's curriculum, pupils write at length, demonstrating their understanding of sentence structure, grammar, spelling and an

awareness of different audiences.

- Recent improvements in the teaching of reading have resulted in there being a more consistent and systematic approach. Younger pupils develop their understanding of phonics and teachers provide these pupils with opportunities to embed their early reading skills with appropriate reading materials. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about their reading. They told inspectors about the different authors whose books they enjoy reading. Pupils who read to inspectors, read with age-appropriate fluency and understanding.
- Teachers display a secure understanding of the mathematical curriculum for the ages they teach. They make effective use of a wide range of pictorial representations and mathematical equipment to support pupils' understanding before moving them on to more abstract concepts. Pupils across the school have a secure understanding of a variety of concepts. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils, particularly the oldest, to apply their understanding across different contexts.
- The quality of teaching and learning in curriculum areas other than English and mathematics is of an equally high standard. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and expect pupils to achieve well across all subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud to attend Bristol Steiner School. The majority of pupils are confident and self-assured. However, where pupils are more reserved, the school's supportive and caring ethos enables them to thrive and flourish.
- Pupils demonstrate maturity and, throughout the inspection, were keen to engage with inspectors. They spoke articulately and knowledgeably about the school and the ways in which leaders and teachers support their emotional and personal development.
- Pupils feel well looked after and safe in school. They have no concerns about bullying and told inspectors that, should they have any concerns, they could tell any member of staff and it would be sorted for them. This was a view shared by parents. Every parent who spoke with inspectors or who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their child felt happy and safe in the school.
- Leaders have taken a proactive approach to teaching pupils about e-safety and, as a result, pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using technology.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They conduct themselves well throughout the day, both in classrooms and in less-structured times around the school site.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They treat each other with respect and are welcoming to visitors. In lessons, behaviour is generally strong. Pupils listen attentively to adults, and to each other. They work hard, applying themselves to their learning. On the rare occasions where pupils' behaviour falls short of expectations, teachers use the school's behaviour

management procedures to good effect. Incidents of poor behaviour are recorded appropriately and in line with the school's procedures.

- Leaders' work to reduce persistent absence and lateness is proving effective. As a result, overall attendance is rising and is now much closer to the national average. However, leaders and trustees recognise that there is still more work to be done in getting all parents to understand the importance of regular attendance and arriving at school on time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders have put in place an assessment framework based on the bespoke curriculum they have established for the school. Where possible, this has been aligned with national benchmarks. For example, National Curriculum objectives are used at the end of key stage 2. As a result, leaders and teachers have a secure and accurate understanding of the quality of pupils' work. They use this to identify important next steps that enable pupils to achieve well.
- Outcomes for pupils are good because, from their various starting points, pupils are making strong progress through the school's curriculum. This is confirmed by the school's assessment information and supported by pupils' recorded learning.
- In reading and writing, pupils consolidate prior learning before moving on to new concepts. They make strong progress in their acquisition of knowledge and skills. In all year groups, the majority of pupils are working at a level in line with the school's expectations. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are strong. They listen attentively to each other, respecting the views and opinions of others. Pupils speak articulately and with confidence.
- In mathematics, pupils are numerate and able to complete calculations in line with the school's expectations. However, because of the limited opportunities for pupils, particularly older pupils, to apply their understanding across different mathematical contexts, outcomes are not as strong as those in English.
- As a result of provision which is tailored to meet their needs, pupils with SEND make progress which is at least in line with their peers, often from low starting points.
- Pupils' outcomes in subjects other than English and mathematics are in line with the school's curriculum and assessment framework. Teachers' strong subject knowledge supports pupils to achieve well in a range of subjects, such as humanities, languages, science and gardening, music, woodwork and eurythmy.
- Inspection evidence shows that pupils are well prepared emotionally and academically for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is good. The kindergarten leader has a secure understanding of the strengths of the provision, as well as the areas which require further improvement. She uses this information well to make the right changes so that children's achievement is good and all statutory requirements are met.
- Children enter the kindergarten with skills and abilities which are broadly in line with, and

sometimes above, those typical for their age. This is especially the case in personal, social and emotional development. During their time in the kindergarten, children make strong progress through the school's curriculum and, as a result, are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- Staff have created a bright and exciting learning environment for children, both indoors and outside. They provide a wide range of activities which are well matched to children's interests and learning needs. As a result, children are engaged and want to learn.
- The early years is a talk-rich environment. Children are articulate and confident. They communicate clearly with each other and are keen to talk to adults about their learning. Although the school has an exemption from formally teaching the literacy aspects of the early years foundation stage, children show interest in reading and writing. Staff respond positively to this and provide them with opportunities to develop their early literacy skills.
- Children display high levels of resilience. When working on a task, they stick to it and see it through to its conclusion. For example, during the inspection, children were transferring colour onto eggs using wet tissue paper for Easter decorations. For some children, this was a challenging task but, with guidance and reassurance from adults, they worked conscientiously to cover the whole egg. Similarly, another child was weaving. This was a task she had been working on for some time, but she still worked with care and dexterity.
- Staff have high expectations and have established clear routines that support children to behave well. Children's behaviour is appropriate for their age and shows that they feel safe and well looked after. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. For example, staff have received paediatric first aid training and fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff instil in children an age-appropriate understanding of risk. Risk assessments are fit for purpose, for example about using the fire wok for baking bread.
- Parents are fully supportive of the school. They told inspectors that their children are happy in school and are making good progress. Parents feel that the school communicates effectively, so that they have a good understanding of how their children are developing, both academically and emotionally.

School details

Unique reference number	109345
DfE registration number	801/6011
Inspection number	10094391

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 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Proprietor	Waldorf School (Bristol) Limited
Chair	Daniel Black
Headteacher	Ruth Glover
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,977
Telephone number	0117 933 9990
Website	www.bristolsteinerschool.org
Email address	reception@bristolsteinerschool.org
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2007

Information about this school

- Bristol Steiner School is smaller than the average-sized independent primary school in Bristol. There are seven classes, two mixed-aged classes in the kindergarten and five classes in the primary phase of the school. Pupils start the primary phase in the September following their sixth birthday.
- During the autumn of 2017, the trustees restructured the leadership of the school. This included the creation of a headteacher's position, as well as other key leadership roles. The current headteacher took up her post in January 2018.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. At the time of the

inspection, there were no pupils with an education, health and care plan.

- At the time of the inspection, no pupils were attending alternative provision.
- The school is a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and has an ethos in line with this philosophy of child development. The school has an early years foundation stage exemption for assessing children against the early years framework and for submitting this information to the local authority. In addition, the Department for Education (DfE) has granted the school an exemption from teaching the reading and writing aspects of the early years framework.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2007 and was judged to be good. Since 2007, the school has been inspected by the School Inspection Service (SIS). The last full standard inspection was conducted by SIS in November 2017. The school's effectiveness was judged to be inadequate. Subsequently, SIS conducted a monitoring inspection, in May 2018, to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. This monitoring inspection judged that, at that time, the school met all the requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place at the request of the Department for Education.
- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning. A number of these visits were carried out jointly with the headteacher and the senior education manager.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, staff and members of the board of trustees, including the chair of the board.
- Inspectors looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance, its school improvement plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of meetings of the trustees. They also considered a range of documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views and listened to a selection of them read. An inspector also visited the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of parents during the inspection and took account of the 41 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as parents' written responses. Inspectors also took account of the results of the pupil and staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jonathan Dyer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector

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