

Cambridge Steiner School

Hinton Road, Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire CB21 5DZ

Inspection dates

21 to 23 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- A small number of the independent school standards were not met at the beginning of this inspection. The issues were rectified before the end of the on-site inspection.
- The standards about leadership and management are not met, because the proprietor has not ensured that all the standards are met consistently.
- Changes in leadership have caused some disruption. This has had a negative impact on the school's effectiveness.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils attend well. As a result, attendance rates are too low.
- Assessment is not fully developed. Pupils' academic needs are not always picked up and acted on quickly enough, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Pupils' knowledge of punctuation and spelling and their use of paragraphs are sometimes weak. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length.
- Systems and procedures are not strong enough to ensure that the independent school standards are always met, and that all aspects of the school are good.

The school has the following strengths

- The current trustees and leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are starting to make a positive difference and the school is now clearly improving.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe and well supported at school. They have no concerns about bullying.
- Pupils behave very well and show good attitudes to learning. They are accepting of other people and celebrate differences.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are particularly strong. The school is a happy and harmonious place that pupils enjoy coming to.
- Pupils' outcomes in art and craft, languages and outdoor practical skills are particularly strong.
- The early years provision is well led and managed. Children's educational careers get off to a good start in the school's three kindergartens.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - trustees hold leaders fully and rigorously to account
 - processes, procedures and systems about all aspects of the school are sufficiently robust
 - all pupils attend school regularly throughout the academic year so that attendance rises in line with the national average
 - all of the independent school standards are met consistently.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all pupils, particularly those with SEND, make strong progress by ensuring that:
 - provision is closely matched to individual pupils' academic needs
 - spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught effectively
 - pupils are given sufficient opportunities to write at length so that they develop writing stamina and the ability to organise their thoughts into paragraphs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The proprietor has not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met consistently. At the start of this inspection, a small number of standards were not met. These were addressed promptly and all standards, other than those relating to leadership and management, were met by the end of the inspection.
- There have been a number of changes to the school's leadership over the past couple of years. This has led to a degree of disruption in how the school is led and managed. As a result, some aspects of the school now require improvement.
- Some systems and processes are underdeveloped or ineffective. For example, until very recently, the school's admissions register did not meet requirements. Systems were not strong enough to ensure that pupils' ongoing destinations, that is, the schools that they moved on to, were always recorded in full when they left the school.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils attend school regularly enough. Applications for leave of absence during term time are agreed too readily, not only when the circumstances are exceptional, as described in the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance on attendance. As a result, attendance rates are approximately five percentage points below the national average.
- Leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently strong throughout the school and in a wide range of subjects. As a result, although some pupils achieve well, and some teaching is effective, outcomes are not yet good throughout the school.
- After a period of turbulence, the leadership of the school is now more settled. The senior leadership team, although newly established, is working well together and is becoming increasingly effective. There are early signs that this is having a positive impact on improving the school.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's self-evaluation is generally accurate. There is some evidence that this is starting to have a positive impact. For example, leaders have identified poor attendance as a particular weakness and have started to take appropriate actions to improve it. It is too soon to see the impact of these actions.
- Leadership of the school's provision for pupils with SEND is increasingly well led. Leaders' strong knowledge and understanding of this important area means that the right issues have been identified for improvement. These improvements in leadership are not yet having enough impact on outcomes for pupils with SEND.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. These key aspects are woven throughout the school's work. Adults model respect and good manners in all their interactions with pupils and with other adults. Pupils understand that they are expected to behave in a similar way and do so accordingly. The school is a happy place where everyone is made to feel welcome.
- Pupils come from a wide variety of countries and cultural backgrounds. These differences are welcomed and celebrated. Opportunities are taken to teach pupils explicitly about the

dangers of racism and prejudice. For example, during the inspection, the oldest pupils were extremely moved by the testimony of a Holocaust survivor who visited the school to speak with them. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern British society.

- The school's curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. Pupils are given plentiful opportunities to learn about the full range of national curriculum subjects. Outdoor learning is a particular strength, with the school taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by its own grounds and the nearby woods.
- Most parents are very happy with the school, having selected it deliberately for its chosen philosophy and approach. Almost all of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to others.

Governance

- There have been a number of changes of trustees since the school was last inspected, by another inspectorate. These changes have led to a lack of continuity and this has had a negative impact on the school's effectiveness.
- Trustees have not held leaders fully to account over time. As a result, the school has not been led and managed well enough. This has led to a fall in the school's overall effectiveness and to some of the independent school standards not being met consistently.
- The current trustees have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know that there is work to do, and they have set about doing it. The trustees have appointed a consultant headteacher, from an outstanding maintained primary school, to help them with this process.
- Trustees have undertaken a review of the school's leadership, in both the short and longer term. Following consultation with staff and parents, the review has now reached completion and trustees have agreed a clear way forward.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The errors and omissions in the school's admissions register, at the start of the inspection, presented safeguarding concerns. Until recently, leaders have not ensured that precise destinations have been established for every pupil that leaves the school and that the local authority is always informed when it has not been possible to obtain such information.
- The school's current leaders and trustees took immediate action to rectify these issues, as soon as they were raised. They understood the safeguarding implications fully. Trustees' primary concern was to ensure that each of the pupils concerned was safely accounted for as quickly as possible.
- The school's single central record of pre-appointment checks meets statutory requirements. All the necessary checks are carried out before adults are allowed to work with children.
- Pupils feel safe at school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils know that they can speak to any adult if they are worried about something. This helps to keep

them safe.

- Staff have been trained appropriately to notice and act on possible signs of abuse and neglect. They report concerns appropriately and suitable action is taken to protect children, where necessary. Records of child protection concerns are well-organised and reflect the actions taken.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets current requirements and is available on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- In some classes, and in some subjects, pupils' individual needs are not fully met. This is because assessment is not as well developed, and well used, in academic subjects as it is in social, emotional and mental health aspects of pupils' development. Where this is the case, individual pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- This is particularly apparent for pupils with SEND. In some instances, their individual needs are not picked up and acted on quickly enough, slowing the progress that they make. External support and advice from the local authority is sometimes not sought quickly enough.
- Teaching of punctuation and spelling is not fully effective, because it is not explicit enough. Too many pupils do not develop a strong command of these key aspects of writing by the time they reach the end of the primary phase of education.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to write at length. As a result, pupils do not develop the stamina necessary to write extended pieces of work. Similarly, they are not given the opportunity to master how to organise their thoughts in written form and how to paragraph appropriately.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are a particular strength of the school. Teaching staff know every pupil well as an individual. This enables them to take good account of pupils' personal and social needs. As a result, pupils are confident and happy at school, and are keen to learn.
- Some teaching is strong and effective. Where teachers have particularly good knowledge of the subjects they teach, this is evident in their use of probing questions that encourage pupils to think more deeply. This helps pupils to make better progress.
- Investigation and exploration are key features of the school's approach. Teachers provide pupils with plentiful opportunities to work with their classmates to solve puzzles and to work through investigations. They have found that this approach captures pupils' interest in their learning and their work. In a meeting with the lead inspector, pupils said that this approach is one of the things they like most about the school.
- Classrooms are orderly and well organised. Routines and ways of working are consistent throughout the school and known well by pupils. This helps the school to run smoothly and classrooms to be calm and productive.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Care for the whole child is a key part of the school's chosen philosophy and is at the centre of its work. That is, trustees and staff see supporting the development of each pupil as a human being as the most important part of the work they do.
- Each pupil is known very well as an individual. Pupils' individual likes, dislikes and interests are recognised and, wherever possible, taken into account. Pupils love their school and are developing into secure, confident and articulate young people.
- Pupils feel very safe at school. They know that they are cared for well and that they can speak to any adult if they are worried about something, whether at school or at home. Pupils know that the adults are there to help them and they trust that staff will always take the time to listen to them.
- Pupils say that bullying is not an issue at the school. Pupils told inspectors that 'everyone knows everyone' at the school and that 'it's like a family'. They know that staff would sort things out quickly if a problem should ever arise.
- Pupils are taught about a range of ways to keep themselves safe. For example, they are taught how to use tools safely when working in the outdoor classroom. Pupils are taught about e-safety, including safe use of the internet, despite the school's philosophy, which means that computers are not generally used in school.
- Pupils develop strong attitudes to equality and diversity during their time at the school. They know that it is wrong to discriminate against someone because of any of the characteristics protected by law. During a discussion with pupils, the lead inspector asked what would happen if someone was racist at school. One pupil spoke for the group by saying, 'You would be severely looked down on by others.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in their classrooms and around the school. They respond very quickly to instructions given by adults. Pupils know the school's rhythm and routines, and this helps them to behave appropriately throughout the day.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and well mannered. They routinely say 'please' and 'thank you', and they hold doors open to allow others to pass through. Throughout the inspection, pupils were keen to speak with inspectors and to talk about their work and their school.
- There are few incidents of poor behaviour. On the rare occasions that these do occur, incidents are recorded appropriately and suitable action is taken to discourage such behaviour from happening again.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils attend school regularly enough. As a result, the school's overall rate of attendance is currently too low.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The school does not participate in any of the national end-of-key-stage assessments, or in the Year 1 phonics screening check. As a result, it is not possible to compare pupils' attainment and the progress they make in this way.
- The school's chosen philosophy means that pupils start their formal learning later than in mainstream schools. This was taken into account during the inspection.
- Some pupils' progress is not as strong as it should be. Where teaching, and the work pupils are given to do, is not focused well enough on their individual academic needs, their progress is slower. This is particularly the case for some pupils with SEND.
- Spelling and punctuation are not developed well enough. Older pupils continue to make simple errors with the spelling of common words and do not master the use of a wide range of punctuation well enough. For example, in some cases, pupils write in a 'stream of consciousness', with little punctuation at all, rather than marking clauses and sentences clearly.
- Writing is similarly underdeveloped because pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length. This means that there is very little evidence that pupils are able to write in paragraphs and sustain their thinking over a longer piece of work.
- Although they start formal learning later, most pupils 'catch up' with their peers in mainstream schools by the time they reach the end of the primary phase, which is Class 5 in this school. Their attainment in reading, mathematics and a range of other subjects is similar to other pupils' nationally, indicating that most pupils make reasonable progress during their time at the school.
- Arts and crafts are a particular strength of the school and pupils make strong progress in these subjects. They are adept at painting and drawing using a range of materials. Pupils learn to use clay effectively, becoming skilled sculptors by the time they leave the school.
- Languages are also a strength. Pupils develop strong oral skills, reciting and debating with maturity. They learn to speak French and German well, developing both their spoken and written skills.
- Pupils develop very strong practical skills during their time at the school. They spend a lot of time outdoors, learning and practising. As a result, pupils develop practical skills that are well above those typical of their age, for example in woodcraft, foraging, tracking and using tools.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is led and managed well. Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of what works well and what could still be improved. Leaders take account of developing knowledge and understanding in the early years community generally, as well as in the Steiner movement itself. Leaders are 'outward-facing', working with colleagues from a range of other schools and settings. As a result, the early years are good and improving.
- Leaders have ensured that suitable provision is in place to meet the needs of the very youngest children, some of whom are two years old. Furniture is of an appropriate size

and suitable arrangements are in place for nappy-changing. Children are provided with cosy and quiet places to take a nap, with their own blanket and comforter always readily to hand.

- Staff in the school's three kindergartens work closely together. They follow well-established routines and have found that this helps children to settle quickly as they learn the pattern of the day.
- Children learn at their own pace during their time in the early years. Their learning is assessed regularly and tracked closely. Staff use this information to help them to support children's learning well by ensuring that they are given a range of interesting and stimulating opportunities and experiences.
- Children learn the kindergarten's rules and expectations very quickly. They speak to each other, and adults, respectfully and kindly. They share toys and other equipment, learning to cooperate with each other well.
- The school is exempt from the academic aspects of the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage. The safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. Leaders have ensured that there is always an appropriate ratio of adults to children, and that a large proportion of staff have been trained in paediatric first aid.

School details

Unique reference number	131937
DfE registration number	873/6029
Inspection number	10094404

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 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	119
Proprietor	The Trustees of Cambridge Steiner School
Chair	Joel Chalfen
Headteacher	Senior Leadership Team
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7665
Telephone number	01223 882 727
Website	www.cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk
Email address	admin@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 March 2008

Information about this school

- The school follows the philosophy and methodology of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship.
- The legal proprietor of the school is the board of trustees of the Cambridge Steiner School. The board currently have five trustees, one of whom has been elected as its chair. The board of trustees also provides governance for the school.
- Between this inspection and the previous inspection by Ofsted in March 2008, the school was inspected by another inspectorate, the School Inspection Service (SIS). SIS inspected the school in November 2010, February 2015 and June 2018. Each of these inspections judged the school to be good and all the independent school standards met.

- The school is registered to take pupils up to 16 years of age. However, until recently, it has only taken pupils up to the end of the primary age phase. The school currently takes pupils until the age of 14 years.
- The school has provision for two-year-old children.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons, some jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work, including their exercise books and their art work. They talked to pupils about their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents, including assessment information. They checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Meetings were held with trustees, senior leaders, other staff and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors considered 72 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 69 free-text responses.
- Inspectors took account of 21 responses to the staff survey and 18 to the pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Randall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

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; and
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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