

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School Limited

14 Love Lane, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 2EA

Inspection dates

11–13 June 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
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and trustees have an accurate understanding of what the school does well. They are clear about the areas that need to improve further, and they are addressing them.
- The majority of pupils, from early years to the end of upper school, make good progress. Pupils leave school, at the age of 17, with a range of GCSE qualifications. Attainment in English and mathematics GCSEs is above the national average.
- Leaders have recently introduced systems to improve their monitoring of the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. It is too soon to see the impact of these developments. The roles of middle leaders are still developing to support this work.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. Pupils demonstrate tolerance and respect, although they do not have sufficient opportunities to reflect on how discrimination may impact on the lives of others.
- Teachers, including in the early years, know their pupils well. They use day-to-day assessment effectively to plan work that meets most pupils' needs.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is good.
- The curriculum is rich and varied. Pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects
- Parents are generally very supportive of the school. However, some feel that communication could be improved.
- Pupils are polite and confident. All pupils enjoy coming to school and are cared for well.
- Older pupils have access to independent careers advice and guidance. As a result, they are well supported to make informed choices about the next stage of their education.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for boarding schools.

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for boarding and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop systems by which leaders and managers monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, including in the early years, so that all pupils make consistently strong progress.
- Develop middle leadership roles to further strengthen the quality of education provided by the school and help to maximise pupils' progress.
- Build further upon pupils' understanding of respect for others by ensuring that they recognise how people may experience discrimination because of their differences.
- Take steps to improve communication with parents so that they have a full understanding of the effectiveness of the school's provision.
- Good practice recommendations in relation to the boarding provision:
 - Any staff member or volunteer working with boarders should have a job description reflecting their duties, receive induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receive regular reviews of their boarding practice. They should have opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding (NMS 15).
Recommendation: All boarding staff should be provided with first-aid training.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the boarding provision	Good
How well children and young people are helped and protected in the boarding provision	Good

- The education lead, along with trustees and other leaders, demonstrates a strong commitment, drive and determination to provide a high standard of education and to ensure that pupils get the best start in life. All staff share this sense of purpose and ambition.
- Leaders ensure that the school consistently meets all the independent school standards.
- Leaders and trustees know the school well. Their evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement are accurate. Plans to address these areas for improvement are well focused and appropriate. Leaders realised that they did not have a clear enough picture of the consistency of teaching across the school and that appraisal systems could be improved. As a result, they have recently introduced new systems to improve the monitoring of teaching and the tracking of pupils' progress. It is, however, too soon to see the impact of these changes.
- Since its introduction, the current leadership structure has been effective in helping to improve the quality of education provided by the school. Over time, roles have been refined and leaders have clarity about who is responsible for each aspect of the school's provision. There has also been a sizeable increase in the number of pupils attending the school. Trustees have recognised the need to expand the leadership team further to ensure that leadership continues to be effective. This includes further developing the role of middle leaders.
- Leaders have developed a rich and varied curriculum that is closely based on the Steiner philosophy. In lower school, up to the end of Year 9, pupils access all aspects of the curriculum. This includes subjects such as eurythmy, art and music, as well as more academic subjects. In upper school, while pupils continue to study the Waldorf curriculum, they also study a range of GCSE subjects.
- The curriculum is enhanced through a range of trips and visitors to school. For example, class 6 (Year 7) pupils spoke enthusiastically about taking part in an Olympic games event along with pupils from other Steiner schools. This complemented their studies on Ancient Greek civilisations. During the inspection, class 8 (Year 9) pupils completed part of their bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- Provision for pupils with SEND is strong. Leaders accurately identify and appropriately address pupils' needs. This is having a positive impact on pupils' skills and understanding. As a result, pupils with SEND are making good progress from their starting points.
- The leadership and management of boarding are good, and this is corroborated by the host families who were spoken to during the inspection. There are well-defined roles and delegated areas of responsibilities. Effective communication between education and boarding staff means that boarders receive all the help and support they need to keep

safe and to enjoy their time at the school.

- Leaders are proactive in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's boarding provision. They seek ways to improve the experience of boarders, using feedback from boarders, their families and the host families. A member of the board of trustees provides external monitoring of the provision, providing a further layer of scrutiny.
- The great majority of parents are positive about the work of the school. This can be summed up in a comment from one parent: 'My children are so happy at Elmfield and they are thriving. The school ensures all children are treated as individuals, developing a love of learning and becoming well-rounded individuals.' However, some parents raise concerns about the quality of information that they receive from the school.

Governance

- An effective system of governance is in place, which means that trustees are well informed about all aspects of the school's work. Each trustee has a specific area of responsibility in relation to the school's provision. Trustees work closely with school leaders and increasingly hold leaders to account for the school's performance.
- Trustees are fully supportive of the new systems which leaders have introduced and the planned changes to strengthen the leadership team.
- Trustees fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively, guided by a detailed annual work plan. All the required policies to support the work of the school are up to date and available on the school's website.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Keeping children safe is central to the work of the school and leaders have created a culture where all staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. As a result, the school is a safe environment for pupils and they are always cared for well.
- All staff have regular and appropriate child protection training, including preventing radicalisation and extremism, and understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Staff know how to report any concerns about pupils' welfare and they are vigilant in looking out for indicators of risk or harm.
- Host families have a clear understanding of the responsibilities that go with their role, including the procedures that should be followed when a boarder is identified as being at risk of harm. Host families undertake safeguarding training that is refreshed annually.
- The safeguarding team maintains the required confidential records and, when appropriate, works closely with relevant external agencies. Leaders follow up concerns with these agencies as necessary.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all adults appointed to work at the school.
- The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and takes into account current government requirements. The policy is published on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Across the school, most teaching is effective and enables the majority of pupils to make good progress. Adults have strong working relationships with pupils and act as good role models.
- Lessons are well planned and delivered. They show clear sequential development over a topic. Teachers regularly review prior learning to help pupils retain and build on their knowledge. Work is generally well matched to the age, aptitudes and skills of individual pupils. Teachers use day-to-day assessment to inform the next steps in their teaching. Adaptations to the curriculum, to provide additional support or challenge, are generally provided for pupils who require them.
- Much learning takes place through thematic units of work. This approach allows meaningful cross-curricular links to be made. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and to make connections between different areas of learning. This helps pupils to become confident in expressing their views and opinions. Themes from stories and fables are central to much of the work of younger pupils. These are often linked to the school's values, for example helping pupils to understand right from wrong. As they get older, pupils are increasingly able to articulate complex concepts and apply values and skills to new topics.
- Pupils are encouraged to review what they have learned, individually and with the support of their peers. Teachers provide pupils with regular feedback in line with the school's policy. Pupils spoken to by inspectors feel well supported by their teachers and helped to make progress.
- Leaders recognise that while pupils are making progress, they are not always clear about whether pupils are doing as well as they could. Through working with the school's staff and staff in other Steiner schools, teachers and leaders are beginning to develop a shared understanding of what can be expected from pupils in particular classes or subjects.
- Leaders are extending the use of standardised assessments in spelling, reading comprehension and number skills. This is to ensure that all pupils reach their potential and to help leaders track the progress of groups of pupils, such as the most able, more effectively.
- Most pupils enjoy lessons. They engage well and talk animatedly and confidently about what they have learned.
- Staff at all levels access training opportunities from a range of providers to support their needs. These help to develop their expertise and confidence. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. This means that they are able to explain ideas and concepts effectively.
- In line with the school's philosophy of child development, pupils start learning to read, write and calculate in class 1 (Year 2). The school has a clear focus on developing these basic skills to help pupils make secure progress.
- Pupils have regular access to a range of specialist teaching, for example in music, art, crafts and Spanish. This helps them to develop skills and confidence in these areas from a young age.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are proud of their achievements and their school. They are keen learners and can explain their views and thoughts eloquently. In line with the school's philosophy, most pupils' work is presented to a high standard.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. A wealth of opportunities encourages pupils to 'look out and go out'. For example, pupils learn about a range of different faiths and viewpoints. They are encouraged to be aware of, and develop, their own views about current affairs. Pupils from overseas help to develop other pupils' cultural understanding, respect and tolerance. Pupils learn about protected characteristics in an age-appropriate way. However, this is not fully embedded within the curriculum and there are too few opportunities for pupils to consider how discrimination can impact on the lives of others. Nevertheless, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they feel safe in school and know that the staff are there to look after them. Incidents of bullying happen, but they are rare. When incidents occur, these are dealt with appropriately by leaders, and often involve parents. Pupils are taught how to keep safe. This includes learning about e-safety, although digital technology is not used in school except during information technology lessons in class 8 (Year 9).
- Pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to the school community. Staff complete regular health and safety checks and risk assessments. These assessments are regularly reviewed so that they remain relevant and effective. Younger pupils are encouraged to explore their environment, for example through tree-climbing in the school grounds. This helps pupils to develop an understanding of taking considered risks.
- Pupils know the importance of keeping themselves healthy, both physically and mentally. Age-appropriate lessons and assemblies on issues such as body image and sexual health help to ensure that pupils can make informed choices.
- From class 6 (Year 7), pupils have access to high-quality, impartial careers guidance that helps them to make informed choices about the next step in their education. Pupils spoken to during the inspection have high aspirations for the future and a desire to study a range of subjects at college. Almost all upper school pupils take part in relevant work experience. In the previous two years, all class 11 (Year 12) pupils have gone on to secure a place in further education.
- Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to school life and the wider community, such as visiting the residents in local care homes and raising money for charities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well, both inside the classroom and around the school.
- Pupils of all ages appear happy and confident. They are polite and courteous, generally demonstrating good manners and thoughtfulness to each other.

- A clear behaviour policy is in place and this is understood by pupils. If behaviour falls below an acceptable standard, incidents are recorded and followed up appropriately. Parents and trustees are informed of any serious incidents of poor behaviour.
- School attendance levels are similar to those seen nationally; the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is very low. Leaders track attendance carefully and are tenacious in following up any concerns. This includes working with external agencies when necessary. Leaders are alert to the possibility of children going missing from education and take appropriate actions to minimise any risk.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils leave school with a range of GCSE qualifications including English language, English literature, mathematics, science and a modern foreign language. Pupils sit examinations at the end of class 10 (Year 11) and class 11 (Year 12). Pupils also develop a range of practical skills, such as woodworking, although these are not formally accredited.
- Outcomes in English and mathematics at the end of class 10 compare favourably to those seen nationally for pupils of the same age. Pupils leave school well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils with SEND, including those with education, health and care plans, make good progress from their individual starting points. This is evidenced by pupils' achievements on standardised tests.
- Across the lower school, most pupils' work shows that they are making secure progress. By the end of class 5 (Year 6), attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is similar to the standards set out in the national curriculum for pupils of the same age. At this age, most pupils can read fluently and with expression. They demonstrate good comprehension skills and a developing love of reading. Pupils talk confidently about the books they like to read and their favourite authors.
- Pupils develop their writing skills well across the lower school, from mainly copying through to independent writing. Pupils are encouraged to use a broad vocabulary and to write for a range of different audiences and purposes.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics, initially focusing on number work before developing their knowledge in other areas of the mathematics curriculum.
- Most pupils learn two foreign languages, beginning with German and Spanish in class 1 (Year 2). Teachers use effective approaches to engage pupils' interests. Lessons initially focus on learning songs and rhymes, then speaking and listening skills, before pupils start to read and write the language from class 4 (Year 5).
- The quality of artwork produced by many older pupils is particularly impressive.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader, working closely with other members of staff, adapts the curriculum and learning environment to meet children's needs and engage their interest. The early years team is committed to ensuring that every child has a positive start to their

school life. Effective systems are in place to support children when they join the school and to ensure a smooth transition into class 1.

- Most children join the school with skills and abilities that are in line with those expected for their age. Staff quickly assess children's needs and provide additional support for those who require it. This includes working with external agencies, such as speech and language therapists, as necessary.
- Adults plan an interesting range of activities for children. A detailed record of each child's progress is kept. Leaders have developed planning to ensure that most activities are sufficiently challenging. This is to enable children to make the progress of which they are capable and to support the older children as they get ready to move into class 1. Leaders have not yet assessed the impact of this work. Children make clear progress across their time in early years. However, as in other parts of the school, leaders do not have a clear overview of how effectively the curriculum is meeting the needs of different groups of children, such as the most able.
- Staff have created a language-rich environment, through the use of regular storytelling, rhymes and songs. The school does not formally teach kindergarten children to read or write. However, adults respond positively to children who show an interest in these aspects of the curriculum.
- Leaders plan and provide activities, such as drawing, sewing, weaving and clay work, to help develop children's fine motor skills as well as encouraging creative and imaginative play.
- Younger children learn from the older children about expectations in the classroom. They socialise well together and are happy to talk about the activities that they are completing. Children have daily opportunities to learn and play both indoors and in the extensive outdoor environment. Older children take on responsibilities such as working out the correct number of cups needed for snack time or leading tidying up the classroom.
- The children are cared for well. Every child has a key worker and relationships between adults and children are warm and nurturing. Safeguarding procedures are effective and welfare requirements in the early years are met fully. Staff have appropriate qualifications in paediatric first aid.
- Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's education and informal discussions with staff are welcomed.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision

Good

- Boarders enjoy their experience of staying with host families during their time at the school. Relationships with host families are positive and constructive. Boarders thrive in a culture of mutual respect, which is embedded into school life.
- Pupils from overseas who board are an asset to school life and make valuable contributions through their different ideas and perspectives. They state that boarding has given them the opportunity to improve their language skills and learn about a different culture.
- Admission and induction practices are well planned and organised. A nominated teacher

within school completes the induction to school and host family with each boarder. This helps boarders to become familiar with the school and community where they will be living. Boarders are given written information, including key names and telephone numbers, in case of difficulty. Leaders also give boarders information about important policies such as safeguarding and behaviour expectations. This maximises the opportunity for a boarder to successfully settle into living with their host family, while understanding the necessary boundaries in place for their protection and safety.

- Boarders know how to make suggestions, raise concerns and make a formal complaint. They have direct access to school leaders and an independent listener. These arrangements give pupils a range of trusted adults with whom they can discuss ideas and raise any concerns.
- There are effective arrangements in place for boarders to keep in contact with their families. These include video contact, telephone calls and email. Host families maintain contact with the boarders' own families, who are updated if any issues arise.

School details

Unique reference number	103876
Social care unique reference number	SC025000
DfE registration number	332/6000
Inspection number	10094406

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. The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Number of part-time pupils	50
Number of boarders on roll	0
Proprietor	Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School Ltd
Chair	Dr Rainer Klocke
Education Lead	Ms Diana Ball
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,220 to £8,034
Annual fees (boarders)	£8,865 to £13,479
Telephone number	01384 394633
Website	www.elmfield.com
Email address	info@elmfield.com
Date of previous inspection	29–30 April 2009

Information about this school

- Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School is an independent school for boys and girls aged 3 to 18 years. The school is in a residential area of Stourbridge, West Midlands. It opened on its present site in 1947 and comprises two large Victorian houses, some purpose-built accommodation and large, attractive grounds.
- The school is a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and closely follows the philosophy and principles of this movement. It aims to enable young people to reach their full potential by developing a strong sense of values, responsibility and confidence, attain good qualifications and have the ability to think freely and independently, with a lifelong curiosity for learning.
- The school is organised into three departments: kindergarten, for children aged three to six years old (Nursery, Reception, Year 1); lower school, for pupils aged six to 14 years (Years 2 to 9); and upper school, for pupils aged 14 to 18 years (Years 10 to 12). Children in the first two years of kindergarten attend part-time. Pupils take GCSE examinations over the final two years of upper school.
- Children up to the age of five follow the early years foundation stage curriculum, with agreed modifications and exemptions from the Department for Education. A transition curriculum is in place to support children as they move from kindergarten into lower school.
- The school has no headteacher. The leadership of the school is provided jointly by the education lead, the bursar and the chair of the college of teachers, supported by department leaders. A council of management is responsible for the governance of the school.
- Admission to the school is non-selective.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is similar to that found nationally. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is a little above the national average.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- A few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Each year, a small number of pupils aged from 14 to 18 years, often from overseas, attend the school for a term or more. Pupils board with a host family. At the time of the inspection, there were no boarding pupils attending the school.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2009 when it was judged to be providing a good standard of education. Since 2009, the school has been inspected by the School Inspection Service. The school's most recent full standard inspection took place in March 2018. The school's effectiveness was judged as good. An inspection of the school's boarding provision last took place in February 2017, the overall experiences of children and young people were judged as good.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard integrated inspection took place at the request of the Department for Education. The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 22 lessons across almost all year groups and including a wide range of subjects.
- Inspectors looked at many examples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils formally and informally. An inspector listened to some pupils read. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, as well as in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the education lead, bursar, other leaders, members of staff, host families and a former boarding pupil. The lead inspector met with representatives of the council of management (board of trustees), including the chair of the council.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation including: the school's self-evaluation and development plans; records relating to safeguarding, boarding, attendance and health and safety; curriculum plans; school performance data; policies and the school's website.
- Inspectors considered parents' opinions through scrutinising 81 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 47 free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke to a sample of parents on the second day of the inspection.
- Thirty-five responses to the staff questionnaire and 44 responses to the pupil questionnaire were considered as part of the inspection.

Inspection team

Catherine Crooks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Dave Carrigan	Social Care Inspector

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