

Inspection of New School Canterbury

Garlinge Green Road, Canterbury, Kent CT4 5RU

Inspection dates: 28–30 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy school, where pupils report that they feel safe and free from bullying. However, leaders have not ensured that all pupils on site are safe, nor are the expectations of what pupils can achieve across the curriculum high enough.

This is a very small school which has only recently opened. Pupils, parents and staff are positive about its progress so far. Parents like the 'gentle approach' their children experience. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to learn outdoors in the woods but would like a pond to add to their learning environment. The wider curriculum provides well for pupils' personal development. However, leaders and trustees have not yet ensured that the quality of education the school provides furnishes pupils with the rich learning experiences they desire and deserve.

While it is true to say that the school already has a distinctive culture, and that leaders are dedicated to developing the core principles of Waldorf Steiner education, much more needs to be done before pupils can fully benefit from this approach. This includes in the kindergarten, where, despite high levels of nurture and care for children, the quality of the early years provision overall is inadequate.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Despite the passion and dedication of staff and strengths in some aspects of provision, notably kindergarten, the school's overall effectiveness is inadequate. Not all of the independent school standards are met, because there are significant weaknesses in the quality of education the school provides. Furthermore, some aspects of protecting the welfare, health and safety of pupils are not strong enough.

Since the school opened in September 2019, leaders and those in positions of governance have been slow to put into practice arrangements judged as likely to meet the independent school standards at the school's pre-registration inspection. Currently, leaders have little oversight of what happens in classrooms on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, the school provides a 'home schooling' service that brings older pupils who are not registered at the school into contact with younger pupils on the school site. This includes shared lessons. Other aspects of this arrangement bring into question leaders' ability to safeguard pupils. Appropriate risk assessments are not in place. Checks on adults other than staff, supply staff and the proprietors are not fully in place or recorded.

Staff have been provided with curriculum planning and assessment tools which promote the principles and methodology of Waldorf Steiner education. 'Purple folders' provide teachers with a sequenced curriculum which covers all aspects of the requirements of the independent school standards. However, a new system to assess pupils' achievements as they move through the school is not yet in use. Although staff find the planning tools useful, they readily admit to still 'finding our way' when planning and assessing learning.

Leaders are beginning to develop provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Since opening, they have identified a growing need for specialist support for some pupils, which is currently provided by a visiting consultant. Leaders have plans to increase this aspect of provision in the near future.

The development of pupils' reading skills is not given enough priority by leaders. No one has a clear overview of how pupils will learn to read, or how effective staff are at teaching pupils to read. Leaders have identified that key staff need to attend phonics training and that resources, including new books, need to be purchased. This will enable staff to approach developing all pupils' reading (and writing) skills in a more consistent way. This will also provide staff with a clearer understanding of how to stretch most-able pupils, as well as supporting those that are falling behind. However, this training has not yet happened. The development of older pupils' reading and comprehension skills is also largely based on the enthusiasm of teachers, rather than a clear plan and rationale from leaders.

Despite many strengths in kindergarten, including in developing children's communication and language skills, the early years is inadequate. This is because leaders have not yet applied for the legal exemptions that will allow teachers in the early years to follow Waldorf Steiner methodology. However, children do well in kindergarten. Routines are firmly established. Children are happy and cooperate well with each other. They love the stories, rhymes, poetry and songs that staff share with them, joining in without any hesitation. Older children act as role models for younger children. Expectations of behaviour are high. The welfare, health and safety of children are given the highest priority by staff in kindergarten.

The teaching of mathematics is inconsistent across the school. Provision for older pupils is stronger, with a clear progression in skills evident and examples of pupils being challenged to apply mathematics in real-life contexts. However, classroom visits and discussions with pupils and staff showed that pupils in other classes do not get similar opportunities to use their number skills to reason and solve problems. Some staff do not have a strong knowledge of the school's mathematics scheme and how activities they plan fit with this.

Despite weaknesses identified in reading and mathematics, the school's wider curriculum is developing well. Pupils enjoy their art and creative work. Handwork, modelling and drawing are given a high priority. Staff use the school's curriculum planning well to develop pupils' knowledge and skills over time. Pupils can explain what they were learning and how this builds on what they already know and understand. For example, older pupils were keen to share how their earlier work on bookmarks is now being used to help them stitch an aerial map linked to their geography topic.

Pupils' personal development is supported well by the curriculum. Ethics lessons and living stories help pupils develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding well. Often, this is covered in daily 'main lessons', which constitute the backbone of the school's curriculum. Pupils learn about the great faiths of the

world, key figures from history, and ponder questions such as, 'Can you buy happiness?' Other examples include the use of therapeutic stories that encompass humanity, kindness, emotional connection with others, and overcoming challenges.

Despite the school not using technology and the internet, pupils are increasingly aware of the potential dangers of using social media. Staff understand that pupils use technology outside of school and make time to discuss the benefits and problems associated with this during circle time sessions.

Most pupils behave very well. Leaders and staff have focused on ensuring that expectations of pupils' conduct are consistently high across the school. Inspectors found no evidence of serious misbehaviour during the inspection. However, there were examples of pupils disengaging with learning when the tasks set for them were not challenging enough.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Policies and staff training are up to date, but the culture to keep pupils safe is not strong enough.

Aspects of the school's 'home schooling' service potentially compromise the safety of pupils. This includes the safety of older pupils not registered at the school, but who share facilities with younger pupils who are.

Not all checks on adults associated with the school have been carried out in a manner that reduces the risks to pupils. Furthermore, leaders have not assessed the risk that older unregistered pupils pose when sharing facilities with younger pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not ensured that safeguarding is effective. Not all checks on adults who come into contact with pupils connected to the school are in place. Risk assessments are not in place to manage the potential risk posed by older pupils who are not registered at the school when sharing classrooms with younger pupils. Arrangements for the school's 'home schooling' initiative should be reviewed to ensure that the welfare, health and safety of all pupils who attend the school are not compromised.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of education is not strong enough. Their self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is weak. As a result, leaders and trustees do not have a clear understanding of the quality of education the school provides. Leaders should ensure that they have a clear oversight of the core business of the school, so that they can acknowledge strengths, and identify what needs to be better in order to plan for improvement.
- Although a new pupil-assessment tool has been purchased, staff are not yet using it. Leaders should ensure that this new assessment system is introduced fully and

as soon as possible. This will enable staff to identify gaps in learning and build on pupils' knowledge and skills over time. This particularly includes reading and mathematics, where levels of challenge and support are inconsistent in some classrooms.

- The development of pupils' early reading skills is not strong enough. Leaders do not have a clear understanding of how reading is being taught. Key aspects such as a consistent approach to the development of pupils' phonics skills, a rigorous approach to teaching reading in line with the school's own stated curriculum aims and providing staff with the training and resources they need are not consistently strong. Leaders know this. Additional phonics training for staff is planned but has not happened. Leaders need to prioritise the development of pupils' reading skills as a matter of urgency, so that all pupils learn to read with confidence and with the fluency required to enable them to access the rest of the curriculum the school provides.
- Leaders have not yet applied for exemptions from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage. However, children in the kindergarten follow a curriculum that is designed as though exemptions have been granted by the Secretary of State. Leaders should apply for these exemptions without further delay.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	147331
DfE registration number	886/6158
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10128244
Type of school	Waldorf (Steiner) School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Number of part-time pupils	8
Proprietor	New School Canterbury Ltd
Chair	Louise Rowley-Jones
Headteacher	Beth Cuenco
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,000
Telephone number	01227 730 067
Website	www.newschoolcanterbury.co.uk
Email address	info@newschoolcanterbury.co.uk

Information about this school

- This was the first standard inspection since the school was registered in September 2019.
- The school occupies part of the site of the former Canterbury Steiner School which closed in January 2017. The school offers a Waldorf (also known as Steiner) curriculum.
- The school has 39 pupils on roll. There are presently a kindergarten and three classes in 'lower school'.
- The school's proprietor is New School Canterbury Limited. The organisation has charitable status and is run by a board of trustees. The board of trustees also provides governance for the school.
- At the time of the inspection, the school appeared to be operating outside of its registration, with pupils above the registered age range attending the school and sharing classes with younger pupils on the school's roll as part of the school's 'home education' service.
- The school has not yet applied for an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included meetings with trustees including the chair of trustees, the headteacher, teachers and support staff, and a representative group of pupils.
- We talked to parents at the start of the school day and also talked to three parents on the telephone.
- When considering the quality of the curriculum, we did deep dives in these subjects: reading; mathematics; art and design (aesthetics). Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time. The lead inspector also heard pupils read.
- The lead inspector reviewed the nine responses to Ofsted's online parent survey and accompanying free-text messages.

- We observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, at lunchtime and break and as they moved around the school.
- We assessed the school's culture to keep pupils safe throughout the inspection. A wide range of documentation was considered, including policies and documents associated with the school meeting all aspects of the independent school standards. The single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Hogarth

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if—
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(2)(f) where the school has pupils below compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their educational needs in relation to personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school—
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—

- 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
- 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

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.

Early years foundation stage

- 1.5 Educational programmes must involve activities and experiences for children, as follows:
 - **Literacy** development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.
 - **Mathematics** involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measure.
 - **Understanding the world** involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

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