

Inspection of York Steiner School

Danesmead, Fulford Cross, York YO10 4PB

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 January 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **No**

What is it like to attend this school?

York Steiner School is a community of warmth, tolerance and nurture.

Pupils here feel safe and, to a very high degree, happy. They know each other well, and they are taught and looked after with care by their class teachers and other staff. Pupils look out for each other and help each other out.

The school is ambitious for its pupils. This applies to achievement in subjects, and achievement in the school's specialist curriculum. Leaders have the same high expectations for all pupils. Pupils are encouraged to aim high and strive to be the best person they can be. The school's curriculum instils a spirit of curiosity and enquiry in pupils. They are comfortable in exploring new ideas and making connections between them.

The school teaches pupils the values of respect and tolerance. Staff model such values themselves. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good in classrooms and around the site. Pupils believe that bullying is rare. They are confident that any concerns are dealt with effectively by an adult. Inspectors agree that bullying is not a problem at York Steiner School.

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

Leaders' expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. This is founded on their ambition to deliver the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship's curriculum. Leaders are well on the way to implementing this curriculum. York Steiner School is characterised by curriculum planning, which is ambitious, well designed, well sequenced and well taught.

Within the overarching Steiner Waldorf philosophy of education, leaders' curriculum is broad. Pupils are taught a wide range of subjects and they learn a rich body of knowledge and skills across subjects. In history, for instance, pupils had researched the causes of a chosen civil war or conflict, explored the consequences of the war, and considered the wider social, political and economic changes brought about by the conflict.

Consistent with the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship curriculum, pupils are routinely provided with opportunities to learn and apply cross-curricular knowledge and skills. This is supportive of their wider acquisition and application of subject-specific understanding in a wide range of subjects. In particular, this approach is effective in providing pupils with many opportunities to experience broad themes of morality and spirituality.

Teaching is effective. To a high degree, this is because teachers know their pupils well as a result of the 'Class teacher' approach taken by the school, where the same teacher stays with the class from pupils leaving Kindergarten to the end of Year 9. Although not necessarily specialists in each subject area, they are well supported by

curriculum plans in most subjects and from the guidance of subject leaders. Inspectors saw that teachers have the expertise and knowledge to be able to deliver the school's curriculum. Teachers use a variety of assessments to identify what pupils have remembered and learned and to identify where some recapping might be necessary.

Teachers and teaching assistants have a secure understanding of how to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' work shows that pupils with SEND achieve well and that expectations of them are as high as for other pupils. A very small number of parents do not think this is the case so much, although other parents are very satisfied with the school's support for pupils with SEND.

Leaders have made reading a priority in school. Pupils read widely and for enjoyment. They read a range of texts across different subjects. Just before the onset of the pandemic, leaders introduced a phonics reading scheme to further support their existing strategies to teach pupils to read. Due to the pandemic, this is not as embedded as leaders would have liked, so some staff are less skilled in the delivery of the scheme than others because they have not received the training yet. That said, the older pupils who have struggled with their reading are now reading confidently and fluently as a result of the teaching they have received.

In the kindergarten, children's learning is enabled through a combination of planned play as well as seizing opportunities to teach the children when circumstances present themselves. The curriculum is a blend of the Steiner Waldorf philosophy and the early years foundation stage. In 'Ring Time', teachers use songs, rhymes and 'call-response' to develop children's skills of recall and their sense of belonging to a community.

Standards of pupils' behaviour are excellent the large majority of the time, underpinned by strong relationships and a culture of tolerance. However, leaders know that some pupils do not attend school enough. Leaders are taking appropriate and reasonable steps to engage with the parents of those children who do not have good attendance.

The personal development of pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils thrive together, and an inclusive environment is promoted to meet the needs of all pupils. The personal development curriculum supports a focus on developing pupils' character so that they are reflective and keen learners, who behave with cooperation towards others.

The school is well led. Leaders' vision is principled and is shared by staff, who are proud to work at the school. Trustees have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are effective in fulfilling their duties as proprietors. They have taken effective action since the previous inspection to 'professionalise' the school's operation, including adherence to the chosen curriculum.

During the inspection, the temperature of the water to sinks in the kindergarten was found to be too hot. Leaders acted immediately to disconnect the supply and assured inspectors that thermostatic measurement valves will be fitted as an urgent priority.

The school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school meets requirements in implementing the statutory guidance on relationships, sex and health education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are trained in the necessary policies and processes so that children are kept safe. Leaders work with external partners, such as the local authority's safeguarding team, to make sure that they are doing all they should be to maintain a strong safeguarding culture. They take appropriate action to further tighten their approach to safeguarding. For instance, with the requirement for remote learning caused by the pandemic, leaders have acted to educate pupils about keeping safe in the cyber environment and have adapted the controls they place on their remote learning provision so that pupils are kept safe when engaged in online learning.

The school's policy for safeguarding is published on the school's website and is compliant with the Secretary of State's guidance. The welfare standards of the early years foundation stage are met.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about and are making any necessary amendments in response to the pandemic. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- Leaders' implementation of their chosen phonics scheme was slowed by the impact of COVID-19, particularly the training of staff in the teaching of the scheme. This means that support for the weakest readers in school is not as effective as leaders intended. They should continue to press ahead with their plans for the full implementation of the phonics scheme as a priority.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Leaders are rightly taking firm action to improve the attendance of those pupils. Leaders are working hard to engage with the parents of these pupils. Leaders should continue to remind and persuade parents of their responsibilities to ensure their children attend school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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	121759
DfE registration number	816/6008
Local authority	York
Inspection number	10212938
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Number of part-time pupils	31
Proprietor	York Steiner School Ltd
Chair	Fionna McEwan
Headteacher	Annabel Gibb
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,750 to £8,500 according to income
Telephone number	01904 654983
Website	www.yorksteinerschool.org
Email address	info@yorksteinerschool.org
Date of previous inspection	30 April to 2 May 2019

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the chair of trustees has changed. An interim school lead has been employed by the trustees to work with the school, including supporting a planned headteacher appointment process. It is anticipated that this will commence immediately following the inspection.
- The school follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. It accepts pupils aged from three to 14 years.
- The school's kindergarten is exempt from some of the learning and development aspects of the early years foundation stage statutory framework. The kindergarten comprises early years children who are of Nursery, Reception and key stage 1 age. Children attending the kindergarten do so on a part-time basis. Some pupils of statutory school age are registered as home educated for part of the week.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the interim school lead, the education manager, the kindergarten lead and other senior leaders. Inspectors also met with the chair of trustees and several other trustees. An inspector met with the school's former SEND lead.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, formally and informally. Inspectors also met with staff, including talking to them individually.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector spoke with the local authority designated officer for York and the York local authority officer who supports the school in its safeguarding work.
- To further inspect safeguarding, inspectors examined the checks the school makes on staff employed at, and volunteering in, the school. Inspectors reviewed

the processes leaders use to identify and help pupils who need support, including liaison with external agencies such as the local authority's children's services.

- Inspectors took into account the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils and the online Ofsted Parent View survey for parents.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nick Horn

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 28(1)(d) the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.

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