

Inspection of Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School Limited

14 Love Lane, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 2EA

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 May 2023

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 Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School is a welcoming, nurturing and tolerant community. Leaders and staff create a culture where pupils feel confident to be themselves. Pupils relish coming to school. They describe the school as 'one large family' and enjoy participating in an extensive range of daily activities. These include opportunities in music, crafts, learning about the natural world and much more. During the inspection, for instance, the school community took part in a walk to the summit of Wychbury Hill.

The school has high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders give serious attention to pupils' social and cultural development, as well as achievement in academic subjects. All of this means that by the time pupils leave the school, they are confident, articulate and well prepared for the future.

Adults and pupils build trusting relationships. Smiles and cheerful interactions are commonplace. Adults take the time to identify and celebrate pupils' unique strengths. This helps everyone to feel safe and valued. Pupils are clear that bullying is exceptionally rare. If an incident should occur, pupils know that teachers will 'help to put things right'.

Pupils are polite, friendly and courteous. They behave very well in class and during other times of the day. They demonstrate consistently positive attitudes towards their education. Pupils are proud of their school and achievements. They go out of their way to make visitors feel welcome.

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

Leaders have designed a broad curriculum. Pupils learn a wide range of subjects in depth. Many pupils, for instance, start learning two new languages from a young age. Teachers routinely provide pupils with opportunities to learn and apply their knowledge across different subjects and through numerous enriching activities. This approach supports pupils' personal cultural development well. In geography, for instance, when learning about India, pupils also take part in a Bollywood dance workshop.

Leaders have designed the curriculum in most subjects to ensure it builds logically. For example, in music, children in kindergarten start by singing lots of simple songs and nursery rhymes. As pupils move from year to year, the repertoire they learn gradually becomes more complex. This step-by-step approach is working well. It means all pupils can sing confidently and expressively in four-part harmony when they reach upper school. However, in a few subjects, leaders and staff are unclear about the essential knowledge they expect pupils to gain and remember at each stage. In these cases, teachers sometimes move on to new learning before pupils are ready. This slows some pupils' learning.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND are fully included in the life of the school. In addition, all pupils with SEND have an individual support plan. These plans include helpful information about how to support pupils best. Most teachers use this information well. However, some teachers lack confidence and expertise in how to fully implement the strategies set out in these plans. This means that some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

Adults teach pupils to read well. Children get off to a good start in kindergarten. Staff use storytelling well to promote a love of reading and to develop pupils' communication and language skills. They use daily reading time to capture children's imagination and broaden their vocabulary. Children love joining in at reading time with familiar stories. Pupils begin learning to read formally in Year 1. Leaders have introduced a well-organised approach to teaching reading in Years 1 to 3. Staff understand what they need to teach and when. They ensure that pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise reading texts that are well matched to their abilities. This helps pupils to build fluency and confidence. Furthermore, leaders check to make sure all pupils are progressing with their reading as they expect. When this is not the case, leaders take prompt and effective action to ensure pupils get the help they need from well-trained adults.

The school environment is calm and very little learning time is lost. During lessons, pupils concentrate well and listen with respect to their teachers and each other. Children learn to behave well because adults establish and maintain clear and consistent routines. In class 3, for instance, pupils knew what to do when their teacher instructed them to line up for assembly by singing a short musical phrase. Pupils responded immediately; they moved swiftly and without fuss. During little and big breaks, pupils socialise and play well together. They actively support the well-being of other pupils. For example, younger pupils organised circle games and ensured everyone was included.

Most pupils attend well and are punctual. Leaders keep a close eye on pupils' attendance. They work constructively with families to overcome barriers preventing pupils from attending well.

As part of the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, all pupils learn about various faiths and traditions. Leaders also ensure that pupils learn about age-appropriate healthy relationships in line with statutory guidance. Older pupils learn about careers and are well informed about where they might choose to study next.

Members of the proprietor body know the school well. They regularly gather the views of parents and pupils. They also receive useful information about the school from school leaders, as well as external reports about the school's effectiveness. They use all of this information to hold school leaders to account and to drive further improvements. Members of the proprietor body check that the independent school standards are consistently met. They fulfil their statutory duties well. For example, they ensure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and that the welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage are met.

In addition, the safeguarding policy, which has regard to the latest government guidance, is published on the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a culture of safeguarding. Leaders make the necessary checks on the suitability of adults before allowing them to work at the school. They maintain accurate records of these checks. Staff receive useful training that gives them a secure understanding of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They are vigilant for signs that a pupil may need help and raise concerns quickly. Leaders maintain accurate records and monitor these closely. Leaders then ensure that pupils who need it get the right help.

Staff teach all pupils, in an age-appropriate way, to learn to keep themselves safe. This includes learning how to keep safe when using a range of technology.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a few subjects, leaders and staff are not clear about the essential knowledge and skills that pupils are expected to know and remember as they move from kindergarten to lower school and then upper school. This is a barrier to some pupils knowing and remembering more. Leaders should ensure that in all subjects, teachers are clear about the specific content pupils need to know and remember at each stage.
- In some classes, the needs of pupils with SEND are not consistently well met. This means some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff know how to successfully implement the strategies set out in pupils' individual support plans.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	103876
DfE registration number	332/6000
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10267592
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	211
Number of part-time pupils	13
Proprietor	Elmfield Rudolf Steiner Schools Ltd
Chair	Sue Dawson
Headteacher	Paul Merrell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6000 to £9900
Telephone number	01384 394633
Website	www.elmfield.com
Email address	info@elmfield.com
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 June 2019

Information about this school

- The school's last inspection was in June 2019. That inspection was an integrated inspection and covered the school and the boarding provision.
- Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School is in a residential area of Stourbridge, West Midlands. It opened at its present site in 1947. The school is made up of two large, Victorian houses, some purpose-built accommodation and large grounds.
- The school is a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and follows the philosophy and principles of the movement.
- The school proprietor body also manages the boarding provision. The boarding provision is often for overseas pupils who attend the school for a term or more. Pupils board with host families selected by the school. At the time of the inspection, there were no boarders on roll.
- The school is organised into three departments: kindergarten, for children aged three to six years old (Nursery, Reception and Year 1); lower school, for pupils aged six to 14 years (Years 2 to 9); and upper school, for pupils aged 14 to 17 years (Years 10 to 12).
- Children up to the age of five follow the early years foundation stage curriculum, with agreed modification and exemptions from the Department for Education.
- The school does not make use of 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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in 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 discuss the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with school lead and other senior leaders. In addition, an inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, music, languages and PSHE education. As part of this focus, they met with subject leaders, class teachers and pupils. Inspectors visited lessons accompanied by senior leaders. They also looked at pupils' work.
- The lead inspector carried out a tour of the premises to check compliance with the independent school standards.

- Inspectors explored safeguarding arrangements by checking safeguarding records, checking the safety of the school site and talking to staff and pupils about how they keep safe.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s staff survey. They also reviewed responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector also spoke to some parents.

Inspection team

Christopher Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Mike Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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