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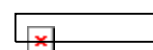
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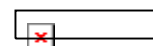
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Introduction and summary

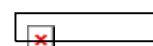


Purpose and scope of the inspection



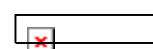
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



Canterbury Steiner School is an independent co-educational day school, opened in 1976. It has 225 pupils aged between 3 and 17. It is a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. The school is a registered charity and is completely self-financing. It follows a curriculum inspired by the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner; within this, individual teachers are responsible for planning and preparing lessons. The school has no headteacher, but is run by the College of Teachers assisted by a non-teaching administrator. The school is divided into year groups. The kindergarten caters for 3- to 6-year-olds. The lower school classes 1 to 8 conform to Years 2 to 9 in National Curriculum terms. The upper school comprises classes 9 to 11, Years 10 to 12 in the National Curriculum.

Summary of main findings



Canterbury Steiner School is a good school with many strengths. The school fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well, and successfully applies the Steiner philosophy to its teaching and learning. It provides a rich curriculum. The teaching is good for all subjects and age

review to bring it fully into line with the regulations.

What the school does well

- it has a broad and balanced curriculum which is guided by a clear philosophy; it includes an especially wide range of educational activities;
- its teaching is well planned in line with Steiner principles;
- lessons in all settings are well taught by teachers with appropriate expertise;
- pupils' achievement is good; they develop a strong ability to make decisions, they speak clearly and fluently, they listen to others, and work together well;
- learning support is very thorough, based on excellent assessment, detailed analysis and monitoring; and
- the school provides very well for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

- complete and implement its draft written policies in line with the latest national guidance to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils; and
- ensure that all classrooms are appropriate in size to allow effective teaching.

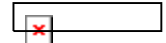
Next steps

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

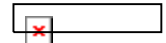
- ensure greater consistency in the marking of pupils' work, especially within age groups;
- continue its programme of reviewing and renewing the accommodation to ensure its effectiveness;
- ensure greater stability in the timetable for the older pupils;
- keep more fully in touch with the views of its parents; and
- review its arrangements for providing careers education and guidance.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The curriculum has very good breadth. It is based on '*Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum*' and embraces the principles first set out by Rudolf Steiner. The curriculum aims to unlock pupils' potential and personal abilities by providing them with a rich and carefully planned experience that enhances and harmonises their own natural development. The social, moral and spiritual growth of every pupil is a central objective. These aims are met very successfully with a coherent, relevant and interesting range of activities, many of which would be offered as extra-curricular activities in other schools. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of visits to places of cultural interest and by residential trips that frequently include physical activities. These add much to pupils' personal and social development.

Although the curriculum is tightly structured, individual teachers have the freedom to interpret the content for their own class. Teachers' planning is very thorough. Yearly, termly, weekly and daily plans set out clear learning objectives following guidance in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Pupils in the kindergarten have a broad range of experiences suited to their ages, with a strong emphasis on social development and on the creative and physical exploration of their own world. In all other classes, the school day begins with a long 'main lesson' of almost two hours encompassing 'themes' which may be drawn from any subject. These are followed for about three to four weeks and are repeated at a higher level as pupils develop. Beginning with a concrete exploration of the world around them, themes are developed to gradually engage pupils in more abstract thinking. This systematic repetition and rhythm that is the hallmark of Steiner education provides a good level of continuity and progression for pupils' learning.

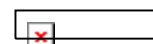
General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses are offered alongside the Steiner Waldorf curriculum for older pupils, who begin examination courses a year later than usual. Results are good. Pupils may also have additional lessons during the lunch break or after school in order to allow sufficient teaching time and flexibility of choice in examination subjects. However, changes in timetable arrangements, as witnessed during the inspection, lead to frustration as well as confusion on the part of pupils. Such issues may arise at any time of the year as a result of staff mobility. Pupils in Class 10 have opportunities for work experience that they find interesting and valuable. An external provider gives careers guidance; the school is reviewing this provision.

In keeping with the Steiner philosophy, the use of computers is not introduced until Class 9 (Year 10), thus weakening the breadth of pupils' technological experience. Aesthetic and creative elements are particularly featured strongly in the curriculum, as are aspects of problem solving. The emphasis on creative play in kindergarten begins this important element of the curriculum. A wide range of arts, craft and handwork skills are taught, leading to high standards. Drama and music have prominence, with opportunities to perform regularly at concerts. Older pupils consider that opportunities for sports could be greater. This reflects the school's difficulty in recruiting appropriately qualified staff but pupils in classes 9 to 11 attend a local sports centre on one afternoon per week to offset this shortfall. The school is aware of the need to review this provision.

Human and social studies, such as the relationship of people with their environment and their past, are strong features of the curriculum, contributing greatly to pupils' personal development. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop slowly at first but soon gather momentum as formal approaches are taught. Speaking and listening are essential elements of the socialisation process. Pupils become articulate and confident to express their views, developing effective decision-making skills through well-structured discussion.

Clear and thorough procedures for screening pupils ensure that any delay in their progress can be addressed with extra support. Support for pupils who have additional learning needs is very good. These pupils have a support plan and their progress is monitored and discussed at weekly meetings of staff. Regular reviews of their progress involve the support co-ordinator, teachers and parents. The school seeks support from other agencies where appropriate to meet pupils' needs.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



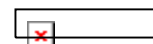
The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Teaching at all ages is well planned in line with Steiner principles. Lessons are taught effectively by teachers with appropriate expertise and experience, both in the main lessons and by specialist subject teachers. Pupils are aware of the objectives of each lesson. Teachers know their pupils very well and understand their capabilities. Relationships are very positive. Pupils respond very well in lessons, often helping each other to succeed, applying effort to their own learning, with very responsible attitudes towards their work. Teachers often employ sensory learning techniques, as when pupils use actions to accompany their rendering of poems aloud. Pupils are given opportunities to learn from direct experience, for example, investigating forming an ellipse by each finding a different position while stretching a length of rope between two fixed points on the playground. Pupils are often encouraged to think about what they are going to say and how they will phrase their points before making their contribution. Some very effective athletics coaching was seen, with infectious enthusiasm and excellent positive evaluation, so that pupils learned how to improve. Good examples were seen also of more senior pupils using information technology to draft their work.

The teaching is guided by a clear philosophy. Teachers understand their pupils' needs very well and this enables them to support their progress effectively. Teachers keep very good clear records. An effective system of assessment also helps to summarise and plan for pupils' social development. Learning support sessions are very thorough and based on excellent assessment, detailed analysis and monitoring. Pupils respond very well in class, and are very well behaved.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this is a strength of school life. Pupils' personal development is an essential element of the Steiner philosophy of educating the whole child. Parents are justified in their confidence that through their time in the school pupils become mature and responsible. Many of the oldest pupils are 'free-thinking' young adults, who are not afraid to express an opinion in the sure knowledge that others will listen. There is scope for the school to formalise opportunities for pupils to express their ideas and to play a greater part in decision-making in the school.

The development of self-awareness and self-confidence is a significant feature of the Steiner approach. Pupils' understanding of their place in the world receives significant contributions from both religion and Eurythmy (a timetabled set of techniques combining spiritual exercise and physical movement). This includes the recitation of verses that include an element of praise for the beauty of creation. The celebration of birthdays, festivals and the cycle of the year reinforce the awareness of the rhythm of life and nature for the younger pupils. Older pupils are encouraged to be curious, to

seek answers for themselves, to argue constructively and to be outspoken.

Strong relationships are a hallmark of the school. Within a calm, relaxed atmosphere teachers reinforce expectations of pupils' behaviour within class and towards each other. They are role models for pupils, whose behaviour around the school is very good. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning which are exemplified in their high levels of enthusiastic participation in the vast majority lessons. They are happy to be in school, knowing that they will receive help when they have difficulties. Residential trips contribute significantly to their social development as well as to pupils' sense of achievement.

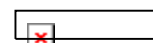
The strong ethos of encouraging pupils to work independently but also collaboratively begins in the kindergarten. Here children respond to the rhythms of the daily routines and learn to share snacks, to wait their turn, to listen to others and to negotiate the use of resources for creative play. They begin to take small responsibilities for day-to-day jobs in the classroom. Throughout the school, teachers encourage pupils to be creative and to use their initiative in learning, for example in collaborating to produce a group presentation or dramatisation to be shared with the rest of the class. Through discussions in current affairs lessons, older pupils are becoming aware of issues that affect the wider world. Study of environmental issues, such as preservation of the rainforest and environmental pollution, raises pupils' awareness of their social responsibility to the wider world.

Pupils' awareness of other cultures begins through the experience of learning both French and German from the age of six. It builds steadily through experiencing poetry, art, music and literature in a range of styles and from different cultures. In history, pupils study ancient traditions, and in religion, world faiths. They learn to respect, accept and value differences. Visits to places of interest and regular performances to parents also contribute to their cultural development. Both pupils and parents noted that they would welcome more of these.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school has an anti-bullying policy which meets the regulations. Pupils considered that the school dealt well with bullying but that there had been significant problems in the past. The school is redrafting its child protection policy so that it matches the requirements of the latest regulations. There is a written policy to promote good behaviour which sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving. The school has an incident book and an accident book and the staff handbook gives very detailed policies as to what to do when planning a school trip. There is a good health and safety policy with attention paid to appropriate risk assessment including fire risks. The fire drill book shows that there are regular fire drills. The school has an appropriate policy for First Aid and implements this very well. Staff members are deployed so as to ensure pupils' proper supervision.

The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and it is planning to improve its provision further.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

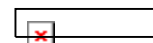
The school meets all but one of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- complete and implement its draft written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance: 'Safeguarding Children in Education (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

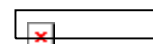


All staff have been subject to checks with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure their suitability to work with children. This includes foreign nationals and also parents who help with school trips. The school has very thorough and comprehensive procedures for checking the identity, qualifications, employment history, fitness and references of staff before their appointment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school is located in suitable premises that are surrounded by a bio-dynamic farm. From a distance, it is hard to tell that the school is not still part of a small rural farm, so skilfully have its buildings been converted, including an old oast house which now houses the classrooms of classes 1, 2 and 3. The numbers of pupils have outgrown this arrangement in this building and two of the rooms are too small.

The school field and grounds are an excellent educational resource that is well used to support a wide range of activities, and the senior pupils use a local sports centre's facilities to supplement the opportunities offered by the school premises.

The school has a purpose-built kindergarten building, a well-equipped theatre, a Eurythmy building, and a small but well equipped computer room, alongside a metalwork and jewellery workshop. The Dane John Building has classrooms and a science laboratory which are ageing but currently serviceable, but the school has plans for new buildings for which it is seeking planning permission. As part of its plans, the school includes development to further improve accessibility for the disabled. The floor of the area for physical education on the first floor of the oast house is deteriorating and will soon need resurfacing to ensure its continued safe use.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

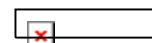
The school meets all but one of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that all classrooms are appropriate in size to allow effective teaching (paragraph 5(j)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school makes the required information available to parents. Details of the upper and the lower school curriculum are available to prospective parents. A summary of the academic performance of pupils in the GCSE examinations is available.

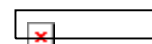
The annual reports to parents are well written and provide a very detailed analysis both of pupils' characters and their progress and development. The main lesson reports include an assessment of effort as well as of attainment. A concern expressed by some parents about the amount of information given to them by the school relates to the difference between reporting in the lower and upper schools. The lower school provides only end-of-year reports, while the upper school provides main lesson reports and termly assessments in addition to the end-of-year reports.

The school's admission and attendance registers are well maintained and completed in line with regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

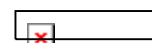


The school has recently reviewed its complaints procedure so that it now conforms with the regulations; three quarters of parents responding to the questionnaire affirmed that they understood the complaints procedure.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Canterbury Steiner School		
DfES ref number:	886/6052		
Type of school:	Steiner		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3-17 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 114,	Girls 111,	Total 225

Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 10,	Girls 13,	Total 23
Annual fees (day pupils):	From £1,656 (age 4) - £5,883 (age 7-12)		
Address of school:	Garlinge Green Chartham Canterbury Kent CT4 5RU		
E-mail address:	info@canterburysteiner.co.uk		
Telephone number:	01227 738285		
Fax number:	01227 731158		
Headteacher:	College of Teachers		
Proprietor:	Canterbury Steiner School Ltd		
Lead Inspector:	Mr Neville Grenyer		
Dates of inspection:	6 - 9 June 2005		

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