



Wynstones Rudolf Steiner School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number 916/6031
Unique Reference Number 115793
Inspection number 298233
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Mrs Jane Wotherspoon HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Age group 2-18	Published 6 March 2007	Reference no. 298233
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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

Wynstones is set in large grounds near Gloucester. It is registered to accept pupils from the ages of 2 to 18 years old. At present, there are 284 on roll, including 11 boarders, some of whom come from overseas for a short period to improve their English. The school accepts pupils with a statement of special educational need and currently has 16 pupils who speak English as an additional language. It was inspected previously in 1996. Founded in 1937, the school's philosophy is rooted in the ideals of Rudolf Steiner and its curriculum follows the Steiner Waldorf approach. It is non-denominational, but Christian in the broadest sense. It aims to *'engage and nourish each child's innate curiosity and love of learning by offering a balance of academic, artistic and practical activities that addresses intellectual, spiritual, emotional and practical development, prioritises quality and depth of learning and emphasises personal responsibility and social awareness.'*

Evaluation of the school

Wynstones School offers a good quality of education to its pupils together with outstanding opportunities for their personal development. Within the holistic experience of the Steiner Waldorf educational framework pupils make good progress and, as they move through the school, develop into confident and articulate young people with flexible minds, independent views and a healthy attitude to life. The ethos of the school and the support from its community enables strong relationships to be forged and each individual to be valued for their own unique contribution. The care and welfare of pupils is satisfactory with some weaknesses in record keeping that the school is working to improve. It meets most of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The good curriculum supports the school's stated aims effectively. The wide range of experiences offered successfully promotes pupils' intellectual, social and emotional development. The integrated approach in the lower and middle schools uses music, story and verse skilfully to draw together elements of the curriculum. This helps pupils to make sense of the world and to apply knowledge and understanding across subjects. The use of stories is a strength that stimulates pupils' imagination and encourages reflection. The development

of literacy and communication skills is given prominence across all age ranges. Along with the very practical approach to learning, which is adopted across the curriculum, visits out of school bring learning to life. Regular opportunities for performing musical works in the choir and orchestra develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Personal and social education is a strong and implicit element of the school's philosophy. Education for health and hygiene is given satisfactory attention but aspects such as drugs awareness are not taught in a systematic way.

As pupils get older, the focus on developing their analytical skills and their depth of subject knowledge is supported by the increasing use of subject specialists. This helps pupils to achieve good examination results particularly in English, mathematics, science, languages and art. Satisfactory careers education includes individual guidance to make choices about examination courses and applications for further and higher education. Most pupils take part in a work experience placement in class 10, which helps them to broaden their awareness of working life. By the time pupils leave Wynstones they know how to learn, have a quiet confidence in themselves and their abilities and understand the views of others. They are well prepared to follow their interests and explore subjects in more depth as the majority move on to further and higher education.

Teaching is good. Some outstanding features have a strong impact on the progress pupils make but are not consistent throughout. Strong relationships and positive interaction between adults and pupils is a hallmark of Wynstones. Where the long main lesson incorporates a variety of teaching methods and is divided into a series of short activities, pupils' attention and interest are sustained. Open-ended questioning encourages pupils to think, explore and explain their thoughts and has a good impact on developing pupils' oral skills as well as their confidence. Pupils participate willingly and, supported effectively by learning French and German from an early age, are generally uninhibited in speaking aloud. High quality written presentation is taught effectively from an early age. Pupils' artwork is displayed to great effect to celebrate their achievements. Some is stunning and sets an example for others to emulate.

At best, lesson planning is thorough, clear and takes good account of what pupils learnt in the previous lesson. Although teachers know their pupils well they do not always use this information to adapt the content of lessons to provide appropriate challenge or support. Pupils with learning difficulties have an appropriate programme of additional support to reflect their needs. However, some of the targets in their individual plans are not specific enough to enable their progress in learning to be measured, tracked, and reported.

Approaches to assessing and recording what pupils know, understand and can do are inconsistent. At times, teachers miss opportunities to evaluate what pupils have learnt in lessons, especially pupils who are less able to articulate

what they know. Lessons typically start with a recall of previous content that sets a good context for learning. Some finish with a review of learning so that pupils are clear what they have achieved. Good practice in some classes includes opportunities for pupils to assess their own work at the end of the main lesson.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is a strength of the school and recognised as such by parents. Wynstones' pupils grow into confident, mature young people who are well prepared to go out into the adult world. They enjoy their education and have positive views about the school. Strong personal relationships are at the heart of this success. From an early age, pupils learn to trust each other and their staff, and develop a deeply respectful and considerate attitude towards one another. This begins in Kindergarten in the small tasks that they do for others and the care they show to their immediate circle of friends. As pupils get older this sense of responsibility to others deepens and extends to the wider world through fund raising activities for local and national charities. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They know exactly what is expected of them and rise to the challenge. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own strengths and to pursue their interests. They have a strong desire to learn, become self-reliant and increasingly take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils are acutely aware of their own spirituality and their empathy with the views and cultures of others is shown in their written and oral work. Through their many and varied visits into the community, including work experience, running school fairs and performing plays, they learn about society in England. Exchange visits to other countries also enable them to broaden their horizons and establish, in their words, 'an ability for looking at the world through other eyes'.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Pupils are looked after and well cared for by staff. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that adults support them if they need help. Consistently high expectations of behaviour, supported by clear ground rules, ensure that pupils work in a positive atmosphere that supports their learning. The school takes every care to match boarding pupils with host families to ensure that they are happy and well cared for.

Many policies and procedures have been updated but systems for recording important information and for checking that practice matches procedures lacks rigour. This stems from a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of

managers to oversee these aspects and to ensure that all is in place as it should be. The First Aid policy is detailed and staff have appropriate training but accidents are not recorded properly. Procedures for administering medication are unclear. Risk assessments are carried out routinely on the building, potential fire hazards and events. However, despite some good practice, risk assessments for off-site visits are not always recorded in writing. Practice evacuations in the event of fire are not always recorded, although the school reports that these are undertaken regularly. All staff have received basic training in child protection but the school has not included the host families of boarders in the training programme. In addition, the designated member of staff who oversees child protection issues has not had refresher training for this role.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has thorough procedures, including seeking clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau, for checking the suitability of staff to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises are satisfactory overall. Specialist facilities support the teaching of subjects such as art, crafts, music, science and eurythmy. Rooms are generally clean, tidy, and adequate for the size of groups that use them. The school is very aware of heating difficulties in some rooms and the fact that a couple of doors in the old building open out onto a downward step without warning. Appropriate action is being taken to rectify these issues.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Most information required by the regulations is readily available and accessible for parents, carers and others. A new prospectus is in progress and will rectify the current omissions relating to details of provision made for pupils for whom English is an additional language and for those with a statement of special educational need. Arrangements for conducting annual reviews of pupils with a statement are unclear and information about the identification and measurement of the pupils' progress is not recorded systematically so that it can be provided to placing local authorities. Parents are updated regularly about events, news and pupils' achievements through the weekly newsletter and annual magazine. The vast majority of parents are pleased with the school's work although some consider they do not know enough about their child's progress. Annual reports vary in quality and in the depth of analysis of the pupils' attainment, progress and personal development.

Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures meet requirements and have been used appropriately by parents wishing to raise concerns. The majority of these have been resolved after discussion with appropriate members of staff.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- comply fully with guidance to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by ensuring that the member of staff designated to take responsibility for child protection issues has refresher training for this role and that host families to boarders have appropriate training (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- carry out and record risk assessments for visits outside the school in accordance with guidance and the school's own policy (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- undertake and record the occurrence of fire evacuation practices (paragraph 3(5))
- record accidents accurately as set out in the school's policy and clarify procedures for administering medication (paragraph 3(6)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of provision for pupils with statements of special educational need and for those for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f))
- supply clear information on the progress of pupils with a statement of special educational need to the appropriate authority for the purpose of conducting annual reviews (paragraph 6(8)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- improve the consistency in the quality of teaching and assessment practices throughout the school and share the outstanding features that are evident in the best lessons
- use what teachers know about the pupils to plan lessons that both challenge and support pupils more effectively and enable them to understand how they can improve
- ensure that there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability so that policies are put into practice consistently.

School details

Name of school	Wynstones Rudolf Steiner School		
DfES number	916/6031		
Unique reference number	115793		
Type of school	Steiner Waldorf		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1937		
Age range of pupils	2–18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 127	Girls: 124	Total: 251
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 17	Girls: 16	Total: 33
Number of boarders	Boys: 1	Girls: 10	Total: 11
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,174–£2,796 part time £4,065–£5,954		
Annual fees (boarders)	£4,057		
Address of school	Wynstones School Whaddon Green Gloucester Gloucestershire GL4 0UF		
Telephone number	01452429220		
Fax number	01452525667		
Email address	college@wynstones.com		
Chair, College of Teachers	Mr Ken Power		
Proprietor	The Council of Management, Wynstones Limited		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Jane Wotherspoon HMI		
Dates of inspection	6–7 February 2007		