

# St Paul's Steiner School

Independent School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number	206/6379
Unique Reference Number	131362
Inspection number	301617
Inspection dates	13-14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Eileen McAndrew AI

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).

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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

St. Paul's Steiner School is an independent, co-educational school for pupils aged two to 14. Admission is non-selective. The school is situated in Islington in north London in a 19<sup>th</sup> century church, now in the final stages of being remodelled for its present use. The curriculum is inspired by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. At the time of the inspection there were 157 pupils on roll. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. During the inspection, class six was away from school on a residential visit to Hadrian's Wall. The school aim is *"to establish a permanent Steiner school for London."*

## Evaluation of the school

St. Paul's Steiner School has achieved its aim of establishing itself on its own site in London. The educational provision is satisfactory and the curriculum is broad and interesting. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with a significant proportion which is good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of pupils' strengths and needs, helping them to make satisfactory progress. The personal development of pupils is a significant strength. The welfare, health and safety of pupils are supported by a good range of policies to help ensure a safe environment during the long-term building work. Pupils are happy to be in the school and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and believe their children are well taught. The school meets almost all the regulatory requirements.

## Quality of education

The satisfactory curriculum makes effective use of the published Steiner Waldorf curriculum. The broad range of the content ensures that all pupils gain experience across areas of academic, creative and practical learning.

Planning in the Kindergarten is diligent and methodical. The Foundation Stage's early learning goals (ELGs) are effectively integrated into the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, providing an interesting and varied curriculum. This enables the majority of young children to make good progress especially in oral communication and personal and social development. Well established routines help to develop childrens' self-confidence and contribute to their ability to settle and thrive.

From classes 1 to 8, the 'main lesson' determines the areas of learning from the themes of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. The main lesson identifies one unifying subject but includes related aspects of other subjects, helping pupils to make links between different aspects of their work. It is allocated just over two hours each morning with a given theme lasting for about three or four weeks. The remainder of the curriculum includes English, mathematics, French, religious education (RE), Eurythmy, music, physical education (PE) and gardening as well as the expressive and creative arts. Literacy and numeracy are given a strong emphasis contributing to pupils' good skills in these areas. Pupils in classes 7 and 8 usefully follow the National Curriculum (NC) programmes of study in mathematics, helping to ensure a smooth transition to maintained schools. Creative aspects of the curriculum are valued and as a result pupils make good progress in crafts and work with resistant materials.

Planning is conscientious and often extensive but varies in quality and usefulness. Some is good or very good with schemes of work which identify clearly what pupils of a particular age will learn over a given time. This in turn helps teachers to assess progress against clear expectations. Where planning is less effective, objectives are too general or are specified in terms of what pupils will do rather than what they will learn. Curriculum planning has been reviewed recently so that there is a common format across the school. This is a promising development which should help to ensure continuity and the avoidance of repetition or omission.

Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans where appropriate, and are well supported through targeted work in class and through individual support where appropriate.

Day and residential visits out of school enhance the curriculum and contribute exciting and enjoyable experiences to pupils' learning. For older pupils, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award opens up a challenging set of opportunities and possibilities in physical, social and personal education.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and a significant proportion is good, resulting in all pupils making satisfactory progress. Planning is always conscientious with objectives, tasks or activities identified, but the most effective specifies precisely what knowledge, skills or understanding are to be learned. The best lessons were characterised by high quality questions which made pupils think for themselves and kept their attention focussed. Teachers targeted individual pupils, checking their understanding and expanding their responses to ensure that all pupils were learning from the exchange. The pace of lessons maintained pupils' application and attention throughout, resulting in rapid progress. Teachers used a good range of approaches, matching the methods to achieve the desired learning. Where learning was less successful, the intended outcome was not clear to the pupils and their interest and attention diminished and the rate of progress declined.

The good relationships between teachers and pupils contribute strongly to pupils' motivation and learning. Teachers have secure knowledge of pupils' strengths and

weaknesses and shape lesson planning to take account of those needs. Pupils are generally confident in asking for clarification or support and are swift to express a view or hazard a guess in the expectation that they will be treated with respect. This in turn encourages active participation and increases the rate of their progress.

Assessment procedures are good with a wide range of different types of assessment, each contributing to a detailed profile of a child's progress. Assessment is currently under review to unify and streamline practice across the school. The school moves from a position of strength in this work.

In the Kindergarten, teachers use the Foundation Stage profile alongside high quality notes and observations on individual children. These combine to give informative and detailed insights into progress and achievement. Similarly, class teachers record observations and comments on individuals' progress, attitudes and, where appropriate, behaviour. These constitute thorough and informative assessment records.

Classes 2, 4 and 6 are screened by the learning support teacher who is the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and the resulting report helps to identify any pupil who might need additional support. Child studies are compiled when the need for a close focus on an individual pupil arises. All teachers make notes on pupils' progress after lessons. The best are very detailed and give clear evidence of shaping future planning with individual needs in mind.

Regular class tests alongside teachers' notes and observations contribute to the detailed annual written reports for parents. Parents who responded to the questionnaire feel fully informed about their child's progress.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. The routines and rhythms of the Kindergarten help to foster childrens' self – confidence within a secure environment with models of behaviour for them to imitate. Times for quiet reflection are established early and continue throughout later years so that pupils are unselfconsciously aware of a spiritual dimension in their lives. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are good. The staff encourage and support the pupils, who respond by behaving very well and trying hard in class. The ethos of the school fosters a clear understanding of right and wrong and this is effectively supported by the school's policies on behaviour.

Pupils become increasingly responsible and self-reliant, taking part in class plays and performances and learning how to be a part of the class community. Visits and residential activities help them to understand more about themselves and how their effort and behaviour affects others, building self-esteem and responsibility. Aspects of citizenship are addressed in the main lesson themes. Both older and younger pupils said that they enjoyed school and their attendance supports this. They believe they make good progress which will help them as they grow up. They are happy to

talk about their work and to take satisfaction from their achievement. Older pupils show increasing maturity and spoke of their appreciation of the challenges offered by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which requires them to undertake some work in the community. They contribute to the life of the school and the wider community through participating in concerts and productions and raising money for charities.

Pupils are aware of the cultural diversity in the school community and appreciate the achievements of other cultures through aspects of the curriculum. Visits to galleries, exhibitions and concerts foster and extend this understanding. By studying the festivals of major world faiths pupils gain insights into the nature of belief and a respect for difference.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The staff have good relationships with pupils, creating an ethos in which pupils feel valued, confident and secure. Welfare, health and safety are satisfactory overall. Pupils' safety is under constant, practical consideration because of the on-going work on the site and the safety record is good, but the school has rightly identified the need to update its health and safety policy. The Fire officer identified a small number of issues for attention and these have been addressed, but his approval should be verified.

The child protection policy is comprehensive and a programme of staff training has begun. First-Aid is well supported by a clear, detailed policy and a number of qualified staff.

Aspects of nutrition and healthy eating are an intrinsic part of the curriculum from the Kindergarten classes and reinforced through daily snack and lunch times. Similarly, the importance of exercise as part of healthy living is emphasised, as are appropriate bedtimes for children of different ages and encouragement to walk to school.

Attendance registers do not always discriminate between authorised and unauthorised absence; some record absence and not attendance and some use pencil.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff have been subject to satisfactory clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level and the school carries out other essential checks before staff appointments are confirmed.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school premises are a 19th century church which provides interesting, though not ideal, accommodation. The premises were saved from dereliction by the school and its parents who have been largely responsible for the heroic work of restoration and re-modelling.

The building of all classrooms is now almost complete. The lack of specialist rooms at present limits some practical activities, for example in design and technology, and science. An adjacent hall is used for physical education and drama.

The outdoor space is inadequate, but the school makes good use of an adjacent green space to ensure play and recreation space. The dedicated area for Kindergarten children provides a safe place for outdoor play. The local sports and leisure facilities provide a range of sports for older pupils and a nearby reservoir is used to extend provision with sailing.

The premises are used at weekends and evenings for recitals, adult education, art and crafts courses and community meetings, in keeping with the community dimension of the school and contributing to wider parental and community relations.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a range of good quality information for its parents, carers and others. The prospectus includes an informative introduction to the Steiner philosophy and curriculum and lists the range of policies which support the school's provision. These make clear the expectations of the school in relation to parental commitment and support for the school's aims and purposes. The school's website adds a useful updating dimension to its regular communication with parents and the wider community.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policy and procedures for handling complaints meets the requirements in full.

## 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:

- prepare and implement a health and safety policy which has regard to DfES guidance *Health and Safety: responsibilities and powers (DfES 0803/2001)* (paragraph 3(4))
- maintain the attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

## 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:

- continuing work on planning to a common format, monitoring progress and setting a date for review
- further developing work on the monitoring and support of teaching and learning
- exploring ways of spreading good classroom practice more widely.



## School details

Name of school	St Paul's Steiner School		
DfES number	206/6379		
Unique reference number	131362		
Type of school	Steiner		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	02 January 1997		
Age range of pupils	2-14		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 78	Girls: 67	Total: 145
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2000-£5170		
Address of school	1 St Pauls Road Islington London N1 2QH		
Telephone number	0207226 4454		
Fax number	0207226 2062		
Email address	office@stpaulssteinerschool.org		
Co Chairs of College	Kay Diaz and Diana Constantin		
Proprietor	Jacob Tas (Chair of Trustees)		
Reporting inspector	Eileen McAndrew AI		
Dates of inspection	13-14 June 2007		