

# Lancaster Steiner School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	888/6040
Unique Reference Number	132095
Inspection number	317816
Inspection dates	26-27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	John Coleman 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).

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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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Lancaster Steiner School is a Steiner Waldorf School and is sponsored by York Steiner School. It began in 1990 as a small toddler group and finally registered as a school in 2003. It is a small village school supported and sustained by a strong community of parents and others who are committed to the Steiner Waldorf approach to education. The school is a registered charity. It is linked to the wider community of Steiner schools, both in Britain and throughout the world.

The school aims to 'support the development of individuals who are able to go out into the world with a sense of purpose, morality, respect for self and others. Who have initiative and creativity, appropriate relationships to authority, persistence in the face of frustration and having the necessary skills and motivation to achieve their potential in their chosen field; be it artistic, scientific, domestic, mathematical, practical, spiritual or philosophical.'

In common with other Steiner schools there is no headteacher; instead the trustees (referred to as the Council) are responsible for the legal, administrative and financial matters. The College of teachers is responsible for educational policy and all teachers are a part of this. The College and the administrator hold responsibility for management of the school. There has been a complete change in teaching staff during the last year after a lengthy period of stability. Previous teachers are working as mentors in support of new staff.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education and care is satisfactory. The school is successful in meeting its aims of providing a holistic curriculum based on the principles of Rudolf Steiner. Teaching is satisfactory and all pupils make satisfactory progress. Social skills are developed outstandingly well. The school meets most of the independent school regulations.

### Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory and makes effective use of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. It provides a broad range of experiences for pupils. It is particularly

successful in helping pupils make connections between areas of learning and the world in which they live.

In the kindergarten the strong emphasis on providing imaginative and creative learning opportunities develops the children's social skills well. The Steiner Waldorf curriculum is suitably matched to the Foundation Stage areas of learning. Personal development of children is highly focused on activities that encourage high levels of independence. Opportunities for children to improve their speaking, listening and communication skills are widespread. Children benefit greatly from the established daily and seasonal routines which instil them with confidence and security.

In classes 1-5 the 'main lesson' is based upon the themes of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and these are planned over a block of 3 or 4 weeks. The main lesson will focus around one main subject but the planning brings together a variety of linked subject material, which helps pupils make sense of their learning. This 2 hour lesson, which takes place each morning, includes themes in English and mathematics, nature studies, history, mythology and environmental studies. Other subjects also on the curriculum are physical education (PE), music, handwork, gardening, painting and drawing. German is taught to all pupils in classes 1-5. In keeping with the Steiner schools' philosophy pupils do not use computers. Pupils are engaged in design technology and craft work using a variety of materials. Opportunities for pupils to write begin largely around the age of 7 years. Provision for PE uses a good number of off site facilities.

Planning of the curriculum varies in quality. A recent review has brought about significant improvements which are at an early stage of being embedded. At its best, in the kindergarten, plans identify activities over a full school year, which is then broken down into blocks. Daily plans include objectives for children's learning. Across the school, there is a lack of consistency in the use of these objectives. In the strongest examples objectives give a very specific steer to the expectations of children's learning. In other cases objectives are too broad and take insufficient account of the prior attainment of pupils which is often wide ranging in classes with multiple ages represented.

There are no extra curricular activities available to pupils at present, though in the past some musical tuition has been provided. The curriculum is enriched by visitors to school such as the police and fire service. Classes make good use of the local environment including trips to the many museums in the area. The school has an allotment and classes 3-5 make weekly visits, grow their own produce and harvest this to bring back to school. Residential opportunities are provided, such as the recent trip to Botton Village for classes 3, 4 and 5.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and a significant proportion is good. Consequently all pupils make satisfactory progress. In the kindergarten children get off to a good start due to good teaching which engages their interest and is based on a good understanding of how young children learn. Throughout the school there

are very good relationships between adults and pupils. There is outstanding development of pupil's speaking, listening, communication and social skills. Teachers promote pupils' self esteem and confidence well by the effective use of praise and encouragement. Teachers know their pupils well. The creative curriculum is used successfully by teachers to develop language skills. Lesson planning is inconsistent. There is a whole school format to lesson plans but these are not all to the same standard and not always complete. The use of learning objectives is similarly varied. Some teachers are skilled in their use of questioning which helps pupils to develop and extend their learning. In some lessons pupils do not always build on existing learning, the pace of new learning slows as they spend too much time consolidating that which is already known.

Assessment procedures are good and a strength of the school. These are carried out in a structured and systematic way. Records are kept well. These show the progress of individual pupils and are used to identify their needs. In the kindergarten a Foundation Stage profile is used alongside the teacher's own notes and assessments. As yet the school does not analyse the results of assessments in order to monitor the progress of classes or groups of pupils. The monitoring of teaching is mainly undertaken by visiting members of the Steiner fellowship in an annual visit. There is no formal internal monitoring procedure to ensure the quality of teaching although new teachers are receiving appropriate mentoring.

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

The provision for pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The rhythms and routines of school enable pupils to develop self-confidence and a maturing sense of responsibility. Pupils' behaviour is good because of the very good role models provided by staff who set high expectations combined with tolerance and understanding. Frequent opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect upon their experiences and to explore these with their peers through discussion. A typical school day will begin with pupils circling around a lighted candle and welcoming the morning, this is a spiritual moment which encourages reverence and respect for people and our environment.

As pupils mature there are increasing opportunities for them to take on responsibilities and everyone takes a turn on a rota of jobs. There is a cleaning round which pupils undertake; they return registers to the office and tidy cloakrooms, all of which adds to the sense of community responsibility. Pupils enjoy school and returns from parent questionnaires support this view. Cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils learn about other cultures through the curriculum and they visit places of interest such as 'The Priory' and a local church. Festivals are at the centre of curriculum planning including celebrations of the Christian, Muslim and Hindu faiths. Pupils are given some knowledge of public institutions and services in England but the provision for this is weak.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. The pupils are well supervised in the day to day activities of school. Staff are vigilant and caring. Relationships are good and pupils say they feel safe and have confidence that they are looked after well. Risk assessments are completed appropriately, policies for child protection, health and safety, and first aid are in place. The school does not have a policy which fulfils the latest guidance for school visits. Named staff have designated responsibilities for first aid and child protection and have training which is up to date. Registers are kept appropriately and attendance is satisfactory.

The curriculum promotes healthy eating through activities, such as gardening and baking. There is good awareness of the food production process through environmental studies and the regular use of the allotment and orchard. Parent letters ask for support in discouraging sweets and chocolate in school. Physical activity on the school site is limited due to the small hard surfaced area and the lack of a school hall. Effective use is made of the adjacent grassed area and several nearby facilities to compensate for this. The school is aware that it does not fulfil the requirements of the disability and discrimination act in that it has no plan in place. The Steiner curriculum does not include sex education and drugs awareness until pupils are older.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Staff are subject to the required safeguarding checks by the Criminal Records Bureau. Records are kept appropriately in a single central register but medical checks are not in place.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in an attractive wooden building which has character and a pleasant atmosphere. Classrooms are of good size given the relatively small numbers of pupils; they are light and airy. A spare classroom is used well for group work. The school does not have a hall but the classrooms are of sufficient size to occasionally assemble all the pupils together. There is no suitable room with a washbasin for pupils who are ill. Outdoors the hard surface is very small but is supplemented by a significant garden area in which the pupils play and study. The perimeter is fenced and gated. The main building is in need of some repair, especially to the roof and window frames. There is some leakage of water which needs urgent attention. The local cricket field and community centre are used for PE.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a suitable range of information to parents, carers and others. Currently, details of the availability of some school policies are not made clear and a

list of staff qualifications is not provided. Recent improvements to the school brochure and parents handbook will soon be available and will include all the requirements. Parents' questionnaires indicate their satisfaction with what is provided. Each term, meetings are held with parents to give feedback on each pupil's progress. Annual reports give parents good information about their child's achievements. School bulletins give much information presented in colourful detail with many contributions from staff and pupils.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policy and procedures meet 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 a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DCSF guidance 'Health and safety of pupils on educational visits' (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff carry out appropriate medical fitness checks (paragraph 4(2)(a)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- improve the resistance of the buildings to the ingress of rain water (paragraph 5(f))
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l)).

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 the school's policies for discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))

- ensure that parents are aware they can request policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h))
- ensure that parents are aware they can request details of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

## 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 consistency in the use of specific objectives for pupils' learning in lesson plans
- improve the use of assessment to evaluate and monitor the progress of groups and classes
- spread good classroom practice more widely.



## School details

Name of school	Lancaster Steiner School		
DCSF number	888/6040		
Unique reference number	132095		
Type of school	Steiner		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	November 1999		
Age range of pupils	3–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 9	Girls: 20	Total: 29
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 3	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3651.96		
Address of school	Lune Road Lancaster Lancashire LA1 5QU		
Telephone number	01524 841351		
Email address	lancastersteinerschool@yahoo.co.uk		
Chair of the College of Teachers	Ms Denise Randall		
Proprietor	Council of Trustees		
Reporting Inspector	John Coleman HMI		
Dates of inspection	26-27 September 2007		