

Waldorf School of South West London

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	208/6344
Unique Reference Number	101073
Inspection number	320405
Inspection dates	10-11 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

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

Waldorf School of South West London is an independent school for boys and girls aged from three and a half to 14 years. It was opened in 1983 and is located in two buildings on a large plot of land in Streatham. There are 94 pupils on roll, 13 of whom attend part time, and 17 receive government funding for their Kindergarten places. This is the first inspection of the school under section 162A of the Education Act 2002. The Kindergarten has not yet been inspected. The school supports pupils who are looked after by a local authority. In line with Steiner practice there is no headteacher, as the College of Teachers is responsible for the educational provision. The Management Group manages the school and the College oversees the day-to-day running with the help of the secretary.

The school's curriculum and teaching are inspired by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner as expressed through the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. The aim of the school is '*to develop, harmonise and unite the faculties of thought, feeling and action in the child, that the foundations may be laid for mental adaptability, initiative and moral strength in adult life*'.

Evaluation of the school

Waldorf School of South West London provides a satisfactory standard of education and a good standard of care. Through the use of the distinctive Steiner curriculum and satisfactory teaching, the pupils make satisfactory progress overall and some, especially younger pupils, make good progress. Parents are fully supportive of the school. There are a number of regulations which the school does not meet.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. In the Kindergarten the curriculum for the younger children is planned around the Early Years Foundation Stage and the children's developmental needs. The Kindergarten provides an imaginative learning environment of good quality, which enables children to make good progress. The core of the curriculum for the other classes, some of which combine groups of pupils from 6 to 14 years of age, is termed the 'main' lesson, with the Steiner Waldorf themes determining the focus. The main lesson lasts for two hours each morning and a given theme lasts for three to five weeks. While focusing on one subject, the themes provide a centre around which learning in other subject areas is planned, helping pupils to establish links between them. Additional lessons in German, French,

religion, handwork, woodwork, gardening, games, eurythmy (an art of movement), art, singing, drama, music, gymnastics and English and mathematics practice lessons make up the rest of the curriculum. Music is promoted consistently from the early years through the learning of rhymes, verses and songs and contributes to pupils' good progress in the subject and to their learning in other areas. Pupils who do not have English as their first language or who need additional help are supported well in lessons. Curriculum-related visits outside school further extend the pupils' experiences.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory, and have some good features. The staff are fully immersed in the Steiner philosophy and deeply committed to it. In line with this philosophy they respect each pupil as an individual and provide for their learning needs through the school's aims of developing the 'whole child.' The staff know the pupils very well, some of whom they have taught for several years in line with Steiner practice of the teacher moving up with the pupils. The staff are confident about teaching the Steiner curriculum and generally put this knowledge to effective use during the main lessons. These main lessons are planned in advance and contain a session of rhythm, verse and songs in which pupils actively participate. This provides a positive start to the lesson. The teachers support individual pupils well in the smaller classes of younger pupils where they can spend sufficient time explaining the tasks, so that these pupils make good progress. However, in the classes of older pupils, some of whom have entered the school more recently and have not yet become immersed in the Steiner philosophy and way of learning, not all pupils fully engage in learning. Staff do not always have sufficient prior knowledge of these pupils' abilities or styles of learning and sometimes do not plan sufficiently challenging activities to meet their needs. Suitable resources are not always sufficient or adapted to meet the needs of all the pupils, especially for the older pupils, whose individual needs are more varied. Some of these lessons lack pace and pupils spend valuable time in wasteful tasks with some of the older pupils distracting others. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress and some, especially the younger ones, make good progress.

Staff make frequent notes on each pupil's personal development and record their progress carefully. Some staff are more successful than others in assessing pupils' academic development accurately, recording it and using this to advantage in their lesson planning, especially for the older pupils. Some of the older pupils in particular are unaware of how well they are doing and what they can do to improve and extend their learning. The younger pupils' progress is carefully noted and parents confirmed that they are kept well informed about their children's progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. The pupils are very well known to the staff and are treated as individuals. There is a strong emphasis on respect for each individual. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning; they learn tolerance and care and concern for others, values which underpin everything that the school does. Pupils grow in self-confidence during their time at the school and some of the older pupils, especially those who have spent most of their school life at this school, show a growing maturity for their age.

The Steiner curriculum is Christian based and the pupils study Old Testament stories. They are given a strong moral code and know the simple school rules. Overall, the pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. The younger pupils behave well but some of the older pupils' behaviour is not as good and they do not set a good example at all times to the younger pupils. Some parents expressed concern about the behaviour of some of the pupils and the school is taking steps to address this. Pupils' social responsibility and moral development are encouraged through the everyday happenings, stories and the history and geography themes in lessons. The pupils have the opportunity to take part in a range of educational and cultural visits to both museums and the theatre, this helps them to also find out more about public services and institutions. They are aware of others less fortunate than themselves and help to raise money for charity. The school's strong emphasis on poetry and literature and the range of performance opportunities means that support for pupils' cultural development is strong and from time to time there are planned multicultural experiences. The differences between cultural groups are respected and celebrated.

Pupils' attendance is good and the younger pupils in particular report that they enjoy life at the school. They comment that it is '*good fun at school...I like school.*' This gives them a sense of security and well-being. Pupils are becoming well prepared for their future economic well being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. There is a range of well thought-out policies in place, which are fully implemented, these include anti-bullying, health and safety and safeguarding children. The school is aware of safeguarding issues and the designated officer has been trained, and with other staff members is now booked on to an appropriate course for updated training in relation to the latest guidance. The vigilant health and safety officer has made good provision to promote the pupils' welfare. Procedures for fire prevention, health and safety on educational visits outside the school, first aid and general safety around the premises are fully implemented. Healthy eating and regular exercise are encouraged. The pupils are sociable and chat together and share the wholesome

food they are encouraged to bring to school. The younger ones help to prepare bread, apple crumble and vegetable soup. The attendance registers meet current regulations; the school keeps the required information for the admission register, but this now needs compiling in one central register. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school checks all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children, but does not yet keep a single central register of staff as required.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are suitable to enable effective learning. The school occupies a large grassed area, leased from Wandsworth Council, on which there are two buildings, one rented from the council and the other rebuilt in 2005 by the school after a fire, which destroyed the previous buildings. This attractive new wooden building provides a suitable range of accommodation which includes classrooms and a toilet block. The toilets designated for the older boys are unsatisfactory, one toilet is broken and there is no hot water; they need complete refurbishment. The classrooms are of an adequate size for most of the teaching groups, although space is limited in some rooms for craft activities such as woodwork. The large grassed area is used for games, and for outdoor activities including gardening, nature study and environmental science. There is a small hard surface play area.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents, carers and others with a good range of information through the prospectus, parent handbook, website and fortnightly newsletter. These give them a clear overview of the school's aims and curriculum. As part of the Steiner philosophy, the parents are very involved in the life of the school and many help on a regular basis. They are given an annual report on their children's progress and meet regularly with the staff. The vast majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were supportive of the school. Many made comments on the school such as, *'I cannot praise this school enough...the level of pastoral care and support families receive is outstanding...it is a unique and valuable school.'*

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures which meet the regulations. However, a number of parents were unaware of the school's procedures and the school is taking steps to rectify this.

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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that all lessons are well planned and that class time is used effectively to meet the needs of the pupils, particularly older pupils (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- provide sufficient resources and use them effectively, particularly for the older pupils (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

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

- ensure that all staff receive safeguarding training and update the policy in line with Department for Children, Families and Schools guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b)).
- maintain the admission register in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

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

- include the required information on the school's central register of checks (paragraph 4C(2 and 3, 6 and 7, 9))

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

- improve the standard of the boys' toilets (paragraph 5(k)).

School details

Name of school	Waldorf School of South West London		
DCSF number	208/6344		
Unique reference number	101073		
Type of school	Steiner		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1983		
Age range of pupils	3.5-14		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 43	Girls: 38	Total: 81
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 5	Total: 13
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees	£3,201-£4,584		
Address of school	Woodfields Abbotswood Road Streatham London SW16 1AP		
Telephone number	020 8769 6587		
Fax number	020 8769 5334		
Email address	info@waldorf-sw-london.org		
Chair of the College of Teachers	Michael Williams		
Proprietors	Philip Martyn; Anna Meuss		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton AI		
Dates of inspection	10-11 January 2008		