

Ringwood Waldorf School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	835/6022
Unique Reference Number	113943
Inspection number	329689
Inspection dates	4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Frater 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.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Ringwood Waldorf School caters for boys and girls between three and 14 years of age. It follows the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum and is a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. At the time of the inspection there were 225 pupils on roll, spread across four kindergarten groups for children aged three to six years, and eight classes for pupils aged between six and 14 years. At the age of 14, most pupils either go on to other Steiner schools nationally or enter the local comprehensive schools. The school provides for children across the full ability range and a few pupils enter the school at an early stage of learning English. Currently, there are no pupils with a statement of special educational need, although a small minority have learning difficulties, mainly specific learning difficulty (dyslexia and/or dyspraxia). The school is part of the Sheiling Trust, a charitable trust which runs a residential special school, the Lantern residential community for adults with special needs and Sturts Farm, an organic farm and residential community for adults with special needs. The school was opened in 1974 and since the last inspection has opened a new hall complex.

Following the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, the school aims to foster the healthy physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development of children and to support them in realising their potential to grow as self-disciplined and self-directing adults with the skill and social ability to co-operate effectively with others.

The school was last inspected in May 2005.

Evaluation of the school

Ringwood Waldorf School is a good school and meets its aims fully. It provides a good quality of education based on the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum. The curriculum promotes outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. While the quality of teaching and assessment is good overall, and leads to pupils' good progress, there are some inconsistencies. All regulations, including those not met at the time of the last inspection, are met. Parents are very supportive of the school.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and is based on the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum. The curriculum policy provides for breadth and balance and includes English, mathematics, science, technology, geography, history, religious education, physical education, art, music, modern foreign languages, drama and '*Eurythmy*' (rhythmical movement) sessions. All subjects are appropriately inter-related and most are taught by the class teacher, although there is some specialist subject teaching. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is integrated well within the curriculum. The programme of study is structured carefully to relate to the pupils' stages of development and provides for good progression and continuity across year groups. There is a strong emphasis on developing social and emotional intelligence alongside academic intelligence. A daily main-class lesson includes activities such as singing, speech and movement and these, together with the cyclical celebration of seasons and Christian festivals develop pupils' rhythmic awareness well. The practical, investigative approach promotes excellent dispositions and attitudes towards learning. Pupils are prepared well for transition to other secondary schools post-14. In the kindergarten, detailed assessments are used effectively to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of each child. In the main school, the curriculum is not adapted consistently to secure the very best progress for all pupils. Subjects are taught in blocks of about three weeks, but there is insufficient regular focus on mathematics in between subject blocks to promote consistently good progress for all pupils in this subject.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall, although there are some inconsistencies. In most lessons pupils are inspired to develop independent learning skills, for example through research into British geographical regions, investigation and observation of combustion, and problem solving using number patterns. In a minority of lessons, which are almost entirely teacher-directed, there are limited opportunities for pupils to apply new knowledge and skills independently. In these lessons the pace of learning is slow, particularly for more able pupils. The most effective lessons focus clearly on the individual pupil's personal and academic progress. They include a sequence of varied and well-structured tasks that maintain pupils' interest and lead them from their previous learning to new and challenging learning outcomes. Assessment of the individual pupil's progress towards the objectives is used to inform the planning of further lessons. Pupils are helped to know how to improve their learning through regular feedback and the identification of 'next steps' in the teacher's marking of their work. However, this focus on progress is not consistent in all lessons. Not all pupils know how well they are achieving or what they need to do to improve their work.

Each pupil has a detailed individual assessment profile that follows them throughout the school. In addition, the class teacher moves with the class through the school and so gets to know the pupils well. Regular class and child studies involve all staff in looking at pupils' work and lessons. This, together with support from Steiner Fellowship advisers, supports improvement in provision. Through these activities, the school has identified the need for more consistent use of assessment to match lessons to the range of pupils' abilities.

The school carries out formal assessments in reading, spelling and mathematics in Classes 2, 4 and 6. It is aware of the need for more regular assessments in order to track progress year-on-year.

Pupils make good progress overall, in line with the quality of teaching and assessment. They make exceptional progress in their personal and social development and in learning how to learn. Formal assessments show that pupils make good progress in reading and spelling and at least satisfactory progress in mathematics. The learning support team provides effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and enables them to progress as well as their peers in English and mathematics. Good use is made of individual education plans to support these pupils in lessons. There is no specific support for pupils for whom English is an additional language and they make satisfactory, rather than good, progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. Through the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum and positive relationships with staff, pupils develop exceptional self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. They say they enjoy school very much and this is evident in lessons and in their participation in extra-curricular activities such as drama productions. During the inspection pupils in Class 8 were eagerly rehearsing for their production of 'A Comedy of Errors'. Through such activities pupils develop good social skills and learn to co-operate well with each other. They become self-directed and resourceful. These personal qualities, together with experience of fund-raising and study of world trade and economics, help to prepare pupils well for their future economic well-being.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school, local, national and global communities. For example, they have built a bicycle shed, supported younger pupils and those in a neighbouring special school, provided a harvest table for the Salvation Army and sung carols at an old people's home. In fund-raising and making clothes for pupils in a partner school in Sierra Leone, they have developed their understanding of African culture and climate and global ecology issues. Pupils' behaviour and the respect they show for others are outstanding. They say they are 'like a big family' in school. In learning to work and play together in harmony, pupils learn to live by a strong moral code. They develop an understanding of the law, rights and responsibilities and local and national institutions.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety are good and the school provides good care for pupils. All policies are in place and implemented appropriately and the necessary checks on staff are made. There is a good level of staffing and pupils are supervised carefully. All teachers are committed to the care and achievement of the pupils and they know them well. Pupils thrive in the safe, secure and caring environment. Support for pupils who find learning difficult is good. Good links through the Shelling Trust ensure the school has access to any support agencies it may need.

The school has improved its procedures for addressing bullying. Pupils say levels of bullying are now low and that they know who to turn to if they have a concern. As a result, they feel safe. Arrangements to promote good behaviour are very effective and result in a calm environment for learning. Pupils engage in physical exercise, although some express a desire for more sporting activities. They have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating, as evident from their packed lunches. Their awareness of healthy lifestyles is developed well across the curriculum. The school has taken effective steps to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act since the last inspection. It carries out full registration of pupils each morning and afternoon but does not monitor attendance at a whole school level.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the kindergarten is good. All areas of learning are covered, with good emphasis on developing children's social skills. In line with Steiner philosophy, formal writing and mathematical skills are taught after the age of six, when children transfer from kindergarten to the main school. The school has applied for exemption in certain areas of the literacy and numeracy goals. Opportunities for teacher-directed and child-initiated play prepare pupils well for developing skills in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, pupils are immersed in story and the rhythm of song and rhyme, and have many opportunities to acquire fine motor control, including through drawing. They engage in number rhymes and develop the concepts of shape and measurement through practical activities such as baking bread. The strong emphasis on children discovering for themselves through physical experience before moving on to higher level conceptual learning promotes excellent dispositions and attitudes to learning.

The quality of teaching and assessment is particularly good in the kindergarten classes for older children. Here detailed assessments of all the early learning goals are used to inform the planning of lessons to meet the needs of each child. As a result, children achieve well. Teachers' effective modelling of tasks and skilful use of questioning results in highly motivated, self-directed children. This is evident in the way children are engrossed in exploring through play, and in their ability to solve problems and make decisions. When a child said there was no pathway through the apparatus set out for play, the teacher asked him what he was going to do about it. He thought for a moment and then created a pathway. Good use is made of the outdoor areas and of natural objects, such as washing and weaving wool, for children to develop knowledge and understanding of themselves and of the world.

Welfare requirements are met exceptionally well and promote outstanding personal development and well-being. Through the good levels of care and support they receive, the children quickly learn to take responsibility by tidying up after activities and helping younger children to settle into routines. They develop an awareness of keeping safe and healthy, as in washing their hands before touching food, and learn to co-operate well with each other.

Leadership and management are good and result in a strong and consistent team approach to provision in the classes for older kindergarten pupils.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- promote consistently good academic progress for all pupils by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use assessment to adapt lessons to the range of pupils' needs
 - all lessons provide opportunities for pupils to apply independent learning skills
 - all classes focus regularly on mathematics
 - progress in reading, spelling and mathematics is measured more regularly across the school
- monitor attendance at whole school level
- extend the strong and consistent teamwork approach to teaching and assessment in the classes for older kindergarten children to the younger class.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		√		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		√		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	√			
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	√			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		√		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		√		

School details

Name of school	Ringwood Waldorf School		
DCSF number	835/6022		
Unique reference number	113943		
Type of school	Steiner Waldorf		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1974		
Age range of pupils	3-14 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 102	Girls: 86	Total: 188
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 23	Girls: 14	Total: 37
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	Based on 'promises' – £3,000 to £6,000 plus		
Address of school	Folly Farm Lane Ashley Ringwood Hampshire BH24 2NN		
Telephone number	01425 472664		
Email address	mail@ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk		
Headteacher	College of teachers of the school		
Proprietor	The Sheiling Trust		
Reporting inspector	Sue Frater HMI		
Dates of inspection	4 June 2009		