

# Steiner Academy Exeter

Gloucester Road, Foxhayes, Exeter, EX4 2EE

**Inspection dates** 19–20 May 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b> <b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Early years provision		Good 2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement.

- Not all groups of students achieve well. The most able students fall short of the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not have high enough aspirations of all the students, particularly the most able. They are not using information about what students already know and can do to set work that is demanding enough.
- Students do not routinely use marking and feedback they receive from teachers to improve their work.
- There are not yet agreed approaches to the teaching of writing and mathematics across the academy.
- Leaders are not conveying a clear message about how teachers are to use the principles of Steiner education to encourage students to produce their best work.
- Leaders and governors are not focusing sufficiently on tackling the most pressing priorities for improvement, in particular improving the quality of teaching.
- Attendance is below average and several students miss significant amounts of learning time.
- Students do not always behave well in lessons. Teachers are not always clear about how to manage disruptive behaviour.
- A number of policies relating to safeguarding are not compliant with current guidance.

### The school has the following strengths

- The Principal and governors have a clear vision for the academy. They have overcome considerable challenges to secure the establishment of the academy and its future.
- The youngest children get off to a good start to their education in the Kindergarten. The early years teaching team provide rich opportunities for children to thrive and flourish across all areas of learning.
- Warm and caring relationships underpin the academy's safe and mainly harmonious environment.
- The distinctive curriculum, with its focus on co-operation and outdoor learning, is effective in promoting students' spiritual, moral and social development.
- The good management of the provision for students with special educational needs ensures their needs are carefully assessed, the right support is in place and they make good progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty’s Inspectors visited 18 lessons, six jointly with the Principal. They scrutinised students’ written work in mathematics and writing and other work.
- The inspectors talked to students informally in and out of lessons. They held discussions with groups of students from class 4, 6 and 7 and heard several students read. The start and end of the day, breaks and lunchtime sessions were observed.
- The inspectors analysed data showing the achievements of different groups, including the most able, and those who are vulnerable to underachievement.
- Discussions were held with nearly all teaching staff. The inspectors met with four members of the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body. Six parents met with the inspector to discuss their views.
- The inspector reviewed a range of evidence and documentation provided by the academy, including reports from lesson observations, minutes of the governing body meetings, arrangements for the safeguarding of students, improvement plans and the summary report on the effectiveness of the academy.
- The 104 responses to the online questionnaire were considered along with the views of 32 staff who responded to the staff questionnaire. The views expressed by parents who wrote separately were also considered.

## Inspection team

Jonathan Palk, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Lyn McNamara

Her Majesty’s Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Steiner Academy Exeter opened in September 2013 as an all through academy free school for students aged 4-16. Currently the academy provides education for 180 pupils from Reception to Year 4 and Year 7 to Year 8. It is smaller than the average school. There are three kindergarten classes that cater for children full time in the Reception year and Year 1. The remaining students are taught in age-banded classes.
- The proportion of students receiving special educational needs support is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding to support students eligible for free school meals and looked after by the local authority. There are no looked after children.
- The academy currently occupies temporary buildings situated on the site of the former Foxhayes School. In September 2015 the academy will relocate to its permanent site at Thomas Hall on the Cowley Bridge Road.
- The leadership team comprises the Principal, the early years leader and the special educational needs co-ordinator.
- Students study the Steiner curriculum. Children in the early years are exempt from some specific areas of learning and there is no requirement for the academy to conduct National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 2.
- The academy is trialling the use of alternative provision called Running Deer situated in Moretonhamstead, Devon.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - ensuring leaders monitor teaching and learning more rigorously
  - ensuring all policies relating to safeguarding and special educational needs are compliant with current statutory guidance
  - ensuring teachers know how to improve their practice in keeping with Steiner principles
  - establishing successful approaches to teaching writing and mathematics and ensuring their consistent use across the academy
  - developing strategies to identify the progress all students are making to closing gaps in their skills and attainment
  - refining the academy improvement plan by clarifying how improvements will be evaluated by leaders and governors and when.
- Improve teaching and learning so that achievement is consistently good for all groups, particularly the most able, by:
  - making sure that teachers' planning takes proper account of students' prior attainment and learning to develop suitably challenging activities
  - enabling students to improve their writing
  - checking that students have the necessary mathematical fluency to tackle mathematical problems and confronting any misunderstandings with greater speed and certainty
  - making sure students improve their work as a result of the feedback they are given.
- Improve behaviour across all lessons by ensuring teachers understand how to deal with disruptive behaviour.
- Build on improvements to attendance by ensuring all students attend as regularly as they can and are punctual to the academy by:
  - raising students' and parents' expectations regarding the importance of good attendance and punctuality
  - rewarding improvements in attendance and punctuality.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### require improvement

- Leadership is not consistently communicating expectations of teaching and learning in the Steiner curriculum. The significant strengths in learning and behaviour that are evident in the Kindergarten are not consistently built upon through the rest of the academy. However, the Principal has succeeded in creating a climate of trust and honest reflection that ensures a culture of collaborative working between all staff.
- During the transition period between the opening of the academy and the move to a permanent building, leaders' priorities have been too diverse and not closely enough focused upon learning and progress.
- Leaders' actions to improve the academy lack coherence. All the staff are engaged in helping drive forward the changes needed but deadlines for the completion of actions, or when action is to be reviewed, are not established. Consequently, the embedding of shared practice is not secure as leaders are not able to hold staff to account for implementing agreed practice. This is particularly the case in using information about students' prior achievement in English and mathematics to target work in lessons.
- Mechanisms for accurately assessing students' achievement against the Steiner-Waldorf curriculum are emerging. Assessment provides a broad picture of individual students' aptitudes and abilities. This information is used to provide individuals with support and encouragement to engage in learning. The pupil premium money is used well for this purpose and has had positive results in improving students' attendance, their confidence and participation in enrichment activities.
- At present leaders are seeking ways to benchmark Steiner-Waldorf assessments against National Curriculum expectations in order to provide a clear picture of the progress students are making over time. Currently, there is a lack of clarity about the skills students have mastered, particularly in writing and mathematics. This limits the teachers' ability to set work that is demanding enough for all groups of learners. This is particularly the case for the most able students.
- The policies underpinning safeguarding in the academy including safer recruitment, anti-bullying, special educational needs and child protection do not meet current statutory guidance. While staff have had recent awareness training on matters such as child sexual exploitation leaders have not made adjustments to personal, social and health education lessons to reflect such issues. However, systems and processes to safeguard students are secure.
- Leaders do not provide sufficient clarity about defining acceptable behaviour. As a result issues with managing behaviour during lessons and at home time persist.
- Leaders and the governor with responsibility for students with special educational needs are uncompromising, dogged and determined in their drive to find precisely the right kind of support to make a positive difference to these students' learning. This support ensures that all students benefit and make positive contributions to their learning.
- The academy has established effective relationships with a range of external providers including speech and language therapists and alternative provision settings. Leaders effectively monitor these provisions including the Running Deer. Leaders are not complacent and review the impact of the work frequently, adapting support if and when necessary.
- The curriculum offers breadth and balance. The Principal has worked hard to address successfully the limitations of the site, for example negotiating the installation of safe outdoor work areas, a music room and communal dining hall. The outdoor spaces are interesting and well resourced. The specialist staff recruited use their skills well to provide extra depth to the physical, aesthetic and creative curriculum.
- The additional sports premium funding has been used creatively to introduce new skills to teachers and students and increase the amount of student engagement in clubs.
- Visitors, and frequent opportunities to take part in plays and presentations, enrich the curriculum. Spiritual, social and moral development is encouraged well within the curriculum. Students are able to reflect frequently during the day and regular learning outdoors helps students develop a closer affinity with the natural world. Students are encouraged to discuss their feelings and responses towards each other and events in their lives. This builds a strong moral and social framework for them to live by. However, there is little coverage of other cultures, their way of life and religious practices in the curriculum which limits students' preparation for life as global citizens.
- Students understand about British democracy. Despite a strong commitment in lessons and at other times to hear the views of students, there is no formal democratic structure for securing their participation in academy improvement.
- The Principal and governors benefit from advice and guidance on curriculum and assessment from the three Steiner Academies situated in the south west of England. Leadership support is provided through a

pairing with a local headteacher. This work is helping academy leaders improve their strategies for evaluating academy effectiveness.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are very clear about improvement priorities. Governors have intensified the challenge they provide and question leaders' focus on the impact of action plans. They have increased their visits to the academy to check on improvements. Governors maintain a regular oversight of safeguarding practice and the provision for those with special educational needs by keeping abreast of individual action plans.
- A number of concerns expressed by parents are well known to the governors. A governor attends regular meetings with the parents and friends association, but is not doing enough to draw on the views of parents in helping shape the development of the academy.
- Governors have used the budget prudently to provide extra support staff but have yet to review their effectiveness. The lack of well-defined and measureable impact measures on the improvement plan limits their ability to evaluate their spending and evaluate effectively.
- Suitable arrangements are in place which link performance of staff to pay progression and management responsibilities.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### require improvement

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Inspectors observed a range of behaviour during the inspection, from much that was highly respectful and courteous to that which was inconsiderate of adults and other students. Students and parents report that behaviour over time is not yet consistently good.
- Students listen well but on occasions they become restless, fidget and lose interest. Similarly they work well together when the work is challenging and engages them, but if the work asked of them does not inspire them they drift off task too easily. Sometimes they do not always exercise self-control and common sense, for example climbing over their desks when asked to return to their seats.
- Older students have a mature approach to tasks and generally will share ideas, listen to each other well and respond quickly to teachers' instructions. This is not always the case and particularly so in lessons where the teacher does not make clear with sufficient assuredness the expectations about appropriate behaviour.
- Teachers do not always challenge students who disrupt lessons and so students do not aspire to behave well at all times. Some have less self-control than others and exploit the freedoms they are given to choose whether to engage in learning or not.
- The children in kindergarten exercise a very high level of independence combined with purposeful learning. They move between activities inside and outside their classrooms seamlessly. Not all the students in other classes manage the transition from one part of a lesson to another as well and consequently time is wasted.
- Behaviour around the academy site is better than in some lessons. Students have learnt quickly to safely negotiate some of the hazards associated with uneven playgrounds and the remnants of the now demolished school. Lunchtimes and playtimes are well organised and students play safely and happily. They show good table manners.
- Home time is boisterous for a number of young children, and at this time adults do not provide clear expectations of behaviour.
- Students who have particular behavioural difficulties receive good guidance from assistants and as a consequence are making good progress in lessons.
- Students enjoy being in the academy. They form strong friendships with each other. Students commented that 'they get to be themselves' and 'quickly feel part of a family'. Older students are compassionate and caring of younger ones and there are no barriers between students of different backgrounds or abilities. Parents report that this is one of the significant strengths of the academy.

#### Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- Safeguarding incidents are dealt with appropriately. Staff are aware of the systems and are quick to alert the safeguarding team of any concerns however small. The safeguarding team liaises well with other

services and is thorough in following through actions to support families and students.

- All accidents are followed through efficiently. The difficult site is thoroughly risk assessed, hazards are routinely reported and action taken quickly to minimise risk to adults and students.
- Trusting relationships between all in the academy ensure that students feel safe. There has been an effective response to bullying. Intervention is thoughtful and tackles the underlying issues successfully.
- The programme for students to understand how to stay safe is not fully in place. An approach to teaching about sex and relationships education has not been agreed and implemented. There have been no lessons on the risks inherent with using mobile phones and other technologies, including the risk of radicalisation.
- Attendance is well below national averages and persistent absence is high. However, overall attendance is beginning to improve.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good and as a result, students are not learning as well as they could. Teachers do not expect the most able students to work hard enough, particularly in deepening their thinking and reasoning.
- The most able students are not challenged to write with sufficient accuracy and pay attention to grammar and punctuation. Older students in particular are not writing with enough precision. In mathematics, students do not build their capacity to reason. This weakness is limiting their opportunity to achieve as well as they could.
- The evidence from lessons and a scrutiny of the most able students' written mathematics work show that teachers do not address students' misunderstandings and uncertainty with enough rigour. Instead there is a tendency to provide answers or methods without checking whether students have understood.
- Teachers encourage and most build well on the students' interests and reinforce students' learning. Teaching leads to some insightful thinking. In most lessons students move on to new learning and teachers give clear guidance to help students complete the tasks.
- In too many lessons teachers do not manage a minority of students' behaviour well enough. As a result time is wasted and students' learning needlessly disrupted.
- Teachers' guidance to the students through the marking of written work is inconsistent. Comments can lack clarity and teachers do not always make sure students use marking to improve their work. Discussions in lessons do not always demand enough by way of answers and thinking that enable students to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support to teachers. Adults readily help students when they are confused or unclear about instructions. They are particularly good with students with special educational needs encouraging them to settle to their work.
- Effective support enables students with significant, complex needs to engage fully in learning experiences.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- There is too much variation between the achievement of different groups and some do not achieve as well as they might.
- There is one year of reliable assessment data. This information shows that students' attainment against the Steiner-Waldorf end-of-year expectations is below where it should be. Attainment in English and mathematics is lower in some classes than others. The information provided by the academy shows that the students are generally making better progress in English than in mathematics. This is also the case for the small number of disadvantaged students.
- Students are good readers tackle new words confidently. Most are avid readers, encouraged by the strong culture of storytelling that runs through curriculum. However, very few of the best readers convert this skill effectively into their writing. The most able students lack techniques for writing effectively across a range of genre. A scrutiny of the most able students' books shows little progress in using correct grammar and punctuation over the year.
- Achievement in mathematics is broadly two years behind students of comparable ages in other settings. Their learning does not build on previous skills already established. Students do not practise their existing skills sufficiently and have few opportunities to acquire fluency in mathematics by solving challenging and demanding problems.
- Less able students and those who are behind are encouraged to improve and consequently are beginning to catch up on others in their year group.

- Students with special educational needs make good progress because of the careful consideration and regard paid to their needs in order to establish precisely the right support. Transition arrangements into the academy and subsequent support are exceptionally detailed. They reflect the great care and consideration taken by all to get it right. As a result these students make good progress from their starting points and some make accelerated progress.
- A small group of students are educated in alternative provision. This is a very recent development and it is too early to evaluate its impact on achievement.

### **The early years provision** is good

- Teaching in the kindergarten classes is consistently good. Teachers' assessments inform learning opportunities so children learn at their own pace and in their own time. Most children are able to focus and concentrate for sustained periods of time. They develop good attitudes to learning.
- Leadership of early years is good. The early years leader models good practice and has established a culture of trusting relationships throughout the Kindergarten. She has developed systems for checking children's progress. Behaviour management strategies are consistently applied and effective.
- Those children who join the academy with special educational needs are carefully reviewed prior to entry. Staff devise programmes of personalised support. These ensure that all children experience the joy of belonging and being part of the class while still having their learning needs recognised and addressed.
- Staff prepare children well for the next phase of education through established transition arrangements. Children come together from the three early years classes. They work alongside each other and their next teacher to establish strong, trusting relationships to build on.
- Staff do not yet fully meet the needs of the most able, older children within the shared Kindergarten experience. As a result they are not well prepared for their learning in future years.
- Adults make pertinent observations about children's progress and development. As a result, adults have an in-depth knowledge of each child's learning.
- Children are happy and enthusiastic learners. They are keen to share their experiences and engage in conversation about both natural and imagined worlds with each other and adults. They talk as they play, constructing a focused narrative. As a result, their expressive vocabulary is extensive and continually extending.
- The academy provides opportunities to learn in the natural environment. Children develop deep respect for nature. For example, they were able to explain how to smell the scent from flowers gently and that you can climb trees but cannot harm them.
- Children's behaviour is good. Teachers quietly sing instructions and directions in all classrooms. Consequently, transitions from one activity to another are smooth and peaceful. Very little learning time is lost. Children have good manners, are caring and have consideration for each other.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring children are safe. For example, staff ensure that the learning environment is appropriately secure and that 'hi-vis' jackets are worn for the daily walk, a first aid kit taken and hand-hold partners established. Children have a clear and developing understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, they talk confidently about safety in the sun or on the roads. Procedures following an accident during the inspection were robust and effective.
- Parents were pleased to discuss experiences with inspectors and noted the many positive approaches staff had taken to help children settle into the academy quickly and grow in confidence and independence.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139661
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	450123

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	180
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brett Parker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alan Swindell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Telephone number</b>	01392757371
<b>Email address</b>	admin@steineracademyexeter.org.uk

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