

Rudolf Steiner School

Langley Hill, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire WD4 9HG

Inspection dates

10 May 2018

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(g)

- This independent school standard relates to the quality of teaching at the school.
- The requirements of this independent school standard were not met at the standard inspection in December 2016 and remained unmet at the subsequent three progress monitoring inspections.
- At the third progress monitoring inspection, in February 2018, the standard was not met because teachers' competencies still varied widely. Planned support was having some impact but improvements were still at an early stage.
- The standard remains unmet because teachers do not plan learning or teach sufficiently well to make sure that pupils achieve good progress over time. The impact of leaders' work to improve teaching and pupils' learning is too slow. Senior staff acknowledge that more needs to be done so that pupils achieve well across all classes.
- There have been improvements in the use of assessment. Most teachers now make better use of information about pupils' prior knowledge and skills when planning learning. Improvements are most evident for pupils in the upper school and those identified through monitoring as not making enough progress. For pupils in the lower school and for the most able, the teaching does not challenge them sufficiently. The same weakness was identified at the standard inspection in December 2016.
- The turnover of staff continues to impede improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Consequently, paragraphs 3(a) and 3(c) are unmet.
- Paragraphs 3(d) and 3(g) are now met because teachers' lesson planning considers pupils' prior learning and attainment. In addition, a framework is in place to regularly assess pupils' work.
- Overall, however, this independent school standard remains not met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- This independent school standard relates to the safeguarding of pupils at the school.
- This independent school standard is not met.
- The requirements of this independent school standard were not met at the standard inspection in December 2016. Ofsted has now inspected this school four times since December 2016. Over this time, leaders have only been able to ensure that this standard was met in November 2017. Leaders have failed to meet the standard at the progress monitoring inspections in May 2017 and February 2018.
- At the third progress monitoring inspection, in February 2018, the standard was not met because leaders had failed to ensure that all new employees had been thoroughly vetted prior to taking up their posts.
- Although a suitable 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy' is published on the school's website, the policy is not implemented effectively.
- The standard is now not met because of two significant factors. First, the culture for safeguarding pupils at the school is not strong enough. Second, as reported at the third progress monitoring inspection, once again leaders have potentially put pupils at risk by not assuring themselves of the suitability of the staff they employ.
- The culture of safeguarding pupils is compromised because previous inadequacies in the arrangements to safeguard pupils have not been taken seriously enough and minimised. The following information is from senior staff to the local press, and from two recent advertisements for class teachers, made available since the third progress monitoring inspection. These quotations demonstrate that leaders have underestimated and downplayed the inadequacies:
 - 'The spokesman blamed the falling pupil numbers primarily on the repeated problems with Ofsted inspections, and with negative media coverage.'
 - 'We made the corrections within three working days of the inspection, because it was a minor but nonetheless important matter.'
 - 'After a critical Ofsted in December 2016, the school is proud to say that the DfE are very pleased with the school's progress and acknowledge the strengths of our Waldorf Curriculum offer.'

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(3)

- This independent school standard relates to employment checks for staff.
- This independent school standard is not met.
- Trustees have failed in their duty to evaluate fully the suitability of appointed members of staff.
- Pre-employment checks for two of the most recent staff appointments were not carried out in line with statutory guidance about safer recruitment, and the details are not recorded accurately on the school's single central register:
 - A query arising from an enhanced criminal record certificate has not been followed up. The dates on the single central register indicate that the checks are complete when they are not.
 - It is not evident from records and discussions whether questions arising from discrepancies in references and the application form were followed up prior to

confirming the appointment or considered sufficiently when assessing the suitability of a candidate.

- Checks for medical fitness, prohibition and disqualification were carried out after the offer of employment for one recent appointment. For another recent recruit, evidence of professional qualifications was obtained after the appointment.
- Details of checks for qualifications and for the medical fitness of a member of staff were not entered accurately on the single central register.
- The lack of rigour and inaccurate recording amount to more than administrative errors. They are indicative of leaders' continuing failure to take their responsibilities seriously. Despite intensive training and previous inspection findings over a long period, staff continue to make the same mistakes.
- These two independent school standards are not met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- This independent school standard relates to the school's arrangements to handle complaints effectively.
- This independent school standard is not met.
- The requirements of this independent school standard were not met at the standard inspection in December 2016 and remained unmet at the first progress monitoring inspection in May 2017. At the second and third progress monitoring inspections, in November 2017 and February 2018 respectively, the standard was met.
- The standard is now not met because:
 - A recent complaint has not been addressed effectively and remains unresolved. The school's response to the complaint is not recorded well enough and the response to the complainant has not followed the school's timescales.
 - The momentum gained in addressing historic complaints has been lost. The process has stalled because the terms of reference for the current investigation are not yet agreed and there are now additional barriers to the process progressing swiftly. Trustees and parents quite rightly say that the process has gone on for too long. Resolution is no longer in sight and complainants are now formally resubmitting their original complaints for resolution.
 - Despite good intentions, the determination by trustees and senior leaders to see the historic complaints through to resolution has not been realised. The complaints have now remained unresolved for well over two years.
- This independent school standard is not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- This independent school standard was not met at the standard inspection in December 2016 and subsequently at each of the three progress monitoring inspections. Reasons for not meeting the standards include, but are not limited to, the failure to ensure that

the independent school standards are met consistently.

- Currently, more independent school standards are not met than was the case in the third progress monitoring inspection. Significantly, those relating to safeguarding pupils and the handling of complaints, which had been met on previous monitoring inspections, are no longer met.
- Crucially, since the standard inspection in December 2016, leaders have failed to sustain improvements. A suitably strong culture for safeguarding pupils has not been established. Serious mistakes continue to be made in the recruitment of staff and the seriousness of inadequacies for safeguarding pupils has been underplayed, particularly with parents.
- The confidentiality of the draft Ofsted report for the third progress monitoring inspection was intentionally breached by the interim principal. Parents and the press knew about the inspection findings before the final version was published to the school.
- Following the public statement in August 2017 acknowledging past failings, trustees have worked extensively on matters arising from the historic concerns. They have taken the lead on the work so that the senior leadership team can concentrate on the strategic business of improving teaching and pupils' learning. However, since the third progress monitoring inspection, in February 2018, the volume of work relating to historic complaints, new complaints and concerns about the school's finances has become overwhelming. The increased workload has reduced leaders' and trustees' capacity to lead and manage effectively.
- Leaders and trustees helpfully met with parents after the third progress monitoring inspection to keep them informed about current developments, as they have done regularly since their appointments. Trustees have asked parents to support leadership capacity relating to: educational leadership; property management; legal expertise; and money raising for the school. The requests are indicative of a lack of capacity for the leadership and management of the school. During the inspection, leaders and trustees confirmed the lack of capacity relating to human resources.
- Some progress has been made recently in assessing pupils' performance and using this information to plan teaching. Leaders still have a lot of work to do to hold teachers to account for the impact of their teaching on pupils' performance. While they frequently monitor learning in lessons, some staff remain unclear about what they need to do to improve their teaching. This further demonstrates leaders' lack of capacity to drive improvements quickly enough.
- Since the most recent meeting with parents, there has been a surge of support. Parents have committed considerable amounts of money, including making advance payments of school fees.
- Leaders are mindful of potentially blurring the boundaries between parents and staff, as was the case previously. Some parents have, quite rightly, expressed concerns about how parents will work with leaders. Although as yet unproven, arrangements have been thought through to include suitable supervision of volunteers by school staff.
- The most recent views expressed on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, show that while most parents are positive about the school's work, 10% of those who responded are negative across a range of aspects of the school's work.

- This independent school standard remains not met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	117631
DfE registration number	919/6109
Inspection number	10054276

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	330
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	20
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley Association
Chair	Peter Harrington
Headteacher	Tim Byford (interim principal)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,577 to £9,857
Telephone number	01923 262505
Website	www.rsskl.org
Email address	langleyc@rsskl.org
Date of previous standard inspection	13–16 December 2016

Information about this school

- The school is currently appealing against the DfE's regulatory actions to:
 - impose a relevant restriction to cease to admit any new students to the school (in the letter from the DfE dated 09/03/2017)
 - de-register the school (in the letter from the DfE dated 25/07/2017).

- The school opened in 1949 and is registered with the DfE as a day school for a maximum of 419 boys and girls between the ages of three and 18 years. The school was originally registered to admit boarders. The school no longer offers boarding provision.
- The school follows the philosophy and curriculum developed through the works of Rudolf Steiner.
- Governance is provided through a board of trustees. Development of the curriculum is overseen by a staff college.
- The school is led by an interim principal.
- Since the third progress monitoring inspection, a principal designate has been appointed to lead the school from August 2018. Other appointments are for two teachers of French and a complaints officer. There are current vacancies for three class teachers, the human resources manager and a school nurse. One member of staff is on long-term sick leave. One member of staff is on planned leave.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school has an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.

The school's inspection history:

- In November 2006, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection of the school. At that time:
 - all of the independent school standards were met
 - the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 2002) were not met.
- In May 2009, Ofsted conducted a light touch standard inspection of the school and an inspection of the boarding provision. At that time:
 - inspectors judged that the school provided a satisfactory quality of education and the quality of boarding was judged satisfactory
 - one of the independent school standards was not met
 - one of the requirements of the early years foundation stage was not met
 - four of the national minimum standards for boarding schools were not met.
- In March 2015, the School Inspection Service conducted a standard inspection of the school. At that time, not all of the independent school standards were met. Following the inspection, the school submitted an action plan, which was rejected by the DfE.
- In March 2016, the School Inspection Service conducted an emergency inspection, following concerns about the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils. At that time, not all of the independent school standards were met. Following the inspection, the school submitted an action plan, which was rejected by the DfE.
- In June 2016, the School Inspection Service conducted a progress monitoring inspection. At that time:
 - inspectors judged that all of the independent school standards were met
 - a parental complaint followed the publication of the report and the DfE commissioned Ofsted to complete the progress monitoring inspection.

- In November 2016, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection, unannounced. At that time:
 - six of the independent school standards were not met
 - the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 were not met.
- In December 2016, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection, unannounced. At that time:
 - the school’s overall effectiveness was judged inadequate
 - the school’s safeguarding arrangements were judged ineffective
 - 13 of the independent school standards were not met
 - the requirements of the statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage were not met.
- In May 2017, Ofsted conducted the first progress monitoring inspection since the December 2016 standard inspection, unannounced. At that time:
 - six of the independent school standards were not met.
- In November 2017, Ofsted conducted the second progress monitoring inspection since the December 2016 standard inspection, unannounced. At that time:
 - two of the independent school standards were not met.
- In February 2018, Ofsted conducted the third progress monitoring inspection since the December 2016 standard inspection, unannounced. At that time:
 - three of the independent school standards were not met.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This is the fourth progress monitoring inspection since the standard inspection in December 2016. This inspection was unannounced.
- Inspectors considered the views of:
 - 154 parents who registered their views on Parent View
 - two parents who wrote to the inspectors
 - pupils who spoke with inspectors formally and informally.
- Inspectors considered the complaints and other correspondence received by Ofsted and the DfE since the third monitoring inspection in February 2018, including those emailed to the inspection team during and after the on-site inspection day.
- Inspectors were made aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the allegations were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors’ judgements.

- Inspectors held meetings with:
 - the interim principal
 - the chair and vice-chair of the trust
 - leaders of the lower and upper school, and the special educational needs coordinator
 - staff who log and investigate complaints
 - staff who maintain the single central register of employment checks and the records of employment
 - the business manager.
- A telephone discussion was held with a trustee.
- An inspector observed teaching across a range of subjects, accompanied by senior members of staff.
- Inspectors considered a range of information about safeguarding pupils, including:
 - the 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy'
 - the single central record of employment checks.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including:
 - assessment information
 - the school's monitoring of teaching
 - the school's records of parental complaints.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website.

Inspection team

Heather Yaxley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marianick Ellender-Gele

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain unmet at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school—
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught; and
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Standards that were met at the previous inspection, but are now judged to not be met at this inspection

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if—
 - 18(2)(a) no such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act;

- 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any such direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction—
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person—
 - 18(2)(c)(ii) the person’s medical fitness;
 - 18(2)(c)(iv) where appropriate, the person’s qualifications;
 - 18(2)(d) the proprietor ensures that, where relevant to any such person, an enhanced criminal record check is made in respect of that person and an enhanced criminal record certificate is obtained before or as soon as practicable after that person’s appointment;
 - and in the light of the information from the checks referred to in paragraphs (c) to (f) the proprietor considers that the person is suitable for the position to which the person is appointed.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person’s appointment.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils.

The school now meets the requirements contained in the following paragraphs of the independent school standards

- 3(d) shows good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons
- 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils’ work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress

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