

Exeter Steiner School

Independent school progress report

DCSF registration number	999/26
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135686
Inspection number	361177
Inspection dates	8 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Mick Megee

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Purpose and scope of the visit

This inspection visit was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005². The visit was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Exeter Steiner School is situated in what was formerly a family centre in the St Thomas district of Exeter. The school has evolved from having a long-standing early years provision on the current and a previous site. The school was then registered in September 2008 to admit five-to-12-year-olds and so is now registered for three-to-12-year-olds. The school has 12 pupils of compulsory school age and 21 children aged three and four who are funded under the Nursery Scheme. There are very few pupils with a statement of special educational needs. As is usual with Steiner schools, the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in the Kindergarten. 'Parent and child' groups meet at the school for several sessions each week. The pre-school children and the Nursery group were last inspected under Ofsted Early Years arrangements in January 2005.

The school has a distinctive philosophy, following the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. The school is affiliated to the Steiner Fellowship, with an established Steiner school at Dartington acting as its support partner. It follows a curriculum based on the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner and its governance is guided by Steiner principles. The school has no headteacher, but the parents' first point of contact is through the administrator. The planning group, with members drawn from parents and trustees, is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. The 'college of teachers' deals with the curriculum and matters of pedagogy. The school is further characterised by its mission statement: 'Education is a journey and not a race.'

Context of the visit

At the time of the school's pre-registration visit, there were some regulatory failings that the school then sought to address through its action plan, submitted in March 2008. The school's first full inspection was in December 2009 when a number of failures to meet regulations were identified. These relate to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils' welfare, health and safety, the quality of the information provided to parents and checks on the suitability of the proprietor and staff. The school's subsequent action plan to address these failures was accepted on 3 March 2010. This is the school's first monitoring visit since the last inspection to check on the progress the school has made in implementing the action plan.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The school's last inspection identified a number of regulations that were not met. As a result of the school carrying out the actions set out in its approved action plan, all of these regulations are now fully met.

At the last inspection, the school did not meet one of the requirements in its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Planning for pupils to have a general knowledge of public institutions and services was judged inadequate. The school has now organised a good programme of classroom activities that are appropriate for the different pupils' ages and educational visits to such places as the local library and recycling centre. These activities give pupils a good opportunity to gain an understanding of the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship.

At the last inspection, there was inadequate provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety, particularly in respect of the implementation of safeguarding policies, the lack of child protection training and in ensuring that risk assessments were up-to-date. The school's safeguarding policy now fully meets requirements, setting out responsibilities and expectations very clearly. In January 2010, all staff received the appropriate child protection training. Two staff have received the higher level training that is required in order to take on responsibility as a designated child protection officer. The school has carried out a thorough review of its risk assessments, and taken any necessary action to remedy any identified hazards.

At the last inspection, the school did not meet a number of regulations for determining the suitability of the proprietor and staff. It had not carried out all the required checks on the proprietor, trustees, all staff and volunteers with regard to their suitability to work with children. These checks include criminal records checks, verification of identity, qualifications and previous employment history, medical fitness, character references and, where appropriate, the right to work in this country. The school did not previously maintain a statutory Single Central Register of all the checks made. The school now has a Single Central Register that contains all the required information and shows that the proprietor and all staff, volunteers and trustees are verified as suitable to work with children at the school.

There was formerly insufficient information provided for parents, carers and others. The school did not publish the particulars of the administrator, proprietor, chair of trustees, and the number and qualifications of staff. The school did not ensure that parents were aware of the safeguarding children policy or the educational provision for those pupils with a statement of special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school's website now meets all these requirements and contains all the required information, including a copy of the safeguarding policy.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

School details

Name of school	Exeter Steiner School		
DCSF number	999/26		
Unique reference number (URN)	135686		
Type of school	Steiner		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1997		
Age range of pupils	3–12		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 6	Total: 9
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 11	Girls: 13	Total: 24
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,305		
Address of school	80 Merrivale Road Exeter EX4 1PT		
Telephone number	01392 427200		
Email address	exetersteinerschool@phoncoop.coop		
Headteacher	Ms Jennie Salmon		
Proprietor	Iain Jamieson		
Reporting inspector	Mick Megee		
Dates of inspection	8 June 2010		