



## **SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE**

### **INSPECTION REPORT FOR ELMFIELD RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL**

**DfE No: 332/6000**

#### **The key inspection judgements for this school are:**

<b>The quality of education</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' personal development</b>	<b>outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership, management and governance</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Effectiveness of the Early Years' provision</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>2</b>

#### **Compliance with the Independent School Standards:**

The school meets the regulatory requirements of schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

#### **Compliance with the Equality Act 2010:**

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

#### **Compliance with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage:**

The school meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

**Date of inspection: 28 February to 2 March 2018**

## **SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School provides a good education for its pupils. The school has made significant progress since the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress in their learning across the school and particularly so in the aesthetic and creative arts and in the upper school. In the kindergarten the 5 to 6-year olds also make good progress in their academic learning and personal development. Able, gifted and talented pupils make good progress in most lessons, but occasionally, in the lower school, they do not achieve their full potential because the pace of the lesson is too slow and learning tasks are insufficiently demanding. Teaching is of good quality overall and has improved since the last inspection. Marking and assessment have also improved since the last inspection and are now consistently good across the upper school. In the lower school they are good overall but more variable because some marking does not provide sufficient guidance to pupils' about how to improve their work. The teaching of the 5 to 6-year olds in the kindergarten is good and prepares them well for transfer into the main school. The assessment of their personal development is excellent, but their intellectual progress is not tracked so well. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with particular strengths in the aesthetic and creative areas. The many visits and trips add to the variety of the curriculum and extend effectively the pupils' educational experiences. Although much of the planning of the curriculum is excellent, some does not sufficiently identify what the pupils are to learn, particularly the able, gifted and talented and this reduces their progress. Pupils with SEND are provided with invaluable support and guidance by the learning support team. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. By the time they leave the school pupils are confident, thoughtful, articulate, polite and compassionate young people who are good learners with strong ethical values and a good understanding of British society and its institutions. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils have a great interest in different cultures, traditions and religious faiths and many opportunities are provided for them to learn about and understand these. Senior managers, trustees and staff are vigilant and knowledgeable about all aspects of welfare, health and safety. Pupils are cared for and safeguarded well. The quality and effectiveness of the leadership, management and governance of the school have improved significantly since the last inspection and have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The Early Years' provision is effective and of good quality.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- ensure that all curriculum planning, like the best, identifies clearly what is to be taught and learned so that pupils make consistent progress;
- improve the consistency of marking and assessment in the lower school, so that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work; and
- ensure that able, gifted and talented pupils in the lower school are consistently challenged by the tasks they are given.

## SECTION B: INFORMATION

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in accordance with Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. It follows the inspection framework agreed by SIS and the Department for Education (DfE).

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors observed lessons, held discussions with trustees, staff and pupils, scrutinised a sample of pupils' work, examined relevant documentation and records and reviewed responses to parents' and pupils' questionnaires completed before the inspection.

The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mr Ted Cohn
Team inspectors:	Mrs Elisabeth Linley and Mr Chris Hall
Steiner Community Consultant:	Mrs Jane Morris-Brown

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School is an independent co-education school for children aged 3 to 17 years. It opened in 1934 and moved to its present attractive site in 1947, since when it has added purpose-built or converted specialist accommodation for subjects such as science, art, pottery, woodwork, metalwork and Eurythmy. It follows the international Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Its aims are to provide an outstanding, engaging, age-appropriate education, which develops the social, emotional, intellectual and physical growth of its children and helps them grow into confident, well educated, creative and adaptable individuals, who become well informed, responsible and compassionate members of society. The children between three and five years follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, with agreed modifications and exemptions. The school has no head teacher and the responsibilities of senior management are exercised by a coordinating group, which includes the education lead, bursar, chair of college and department leads, in close consultation with the council of management. It is organised into three departments: the kindergarten, for 3 to 6 years; the lower school for 6 to 14-year olds; and the upper school, for 14 to 17-year olds. Pupils take GCSE courses over the three years of the upper school. The school's last full inspection took place in September 2015.

The school uses the Steiner Waldorf system of naming classes and these names are used throughout the report. Their corresponding National Curriculum years are shown below.

<b>Steiner class name</b>	<b>National Curriculum Year</b>
Kindergarten	Nursery, Reception, Y 1
Class 1 (Lower School)	Year 2
Class 2 (Lower School)	Year 3
Class 3 (Lower School)	Year 4
Class 4 (Lower School)	Year 5
Class 5 (Lower School)	Year 6
Class 6 (Middle School)	Year 7
Class 7 (Middle School)	Year 8
Class 8 (Middle School)	Year 9
Class 9 (Upper School)	Year 10
Class 10 (Upper School)	Year 11
Class 11 (Upper School)	Year 12

## **SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

### **1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

#### **Pupils' learning and achievement**

Pupils of all abilities make good progress in their learning across the school. They are enthusiastic about their learning, settle quickly to their tasks and listen carefully to their teachers' explanations and instructions. They make particularly good progress in the aesthetic and creative arts and in the development of their literacy and oral skills. The progress of the 5 to 6-year olds in the kindergarten is good and they are well prepared for the more formal work that they will do in the lower school. During the early and middle years of their education at the school pupils develop good work habits and learning skills, such as working well individually and in small groups, where they also learn to make good presentations to the class. These skills and work habits serve pupils well in the upper school years, where progress in learning is consistently good. Pupils with SEND make good progress, well supported by the learning support department. Occasionally the able, gifted and talented pupils' progress in the lower school slows where lessons do not provide sufficient opportunities for them to fulfil their potential.

Pupils achieve well in lessons. The previously recorded work in their books and files shows that over time their achievement is good. This is reflected in the high levels of success that pupils achieve in GCSE examinations.

#### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

Teaching and assessment are of good quality and have improved since the last inspection. Teachers strongly espouse British and Steiner values, and these successfully underpin all that they do in the classroom. The great majority of lessons are well planned and organised, with clear learning objectives and appropriate learning tasks to achieve these objectives. The teaching of pupils with SEND is particularly well planned for, in collaboration with the learning support team, including those who have formal Education and Health Care (EHC) plans and this enables all these pupils to make consistently good progress. The teaching of the able, gifted and talented pupils in the lower school does not always challenge them. Increasingly, teachers include open-ended tasks that allow these pupils to demonstrate their ability or make specific provision for them, so that they make better progress than at the time of the last inspection. The teaching of the 5 to 6-year olds in the kindergarten is good. Their personal development is very well assessed and recorded, but their academic progress is not tracked as well.

Teachers generally provide clear and lively explanations, including some excellent story-telling, and in the upper school they make very effective use of ICT to support their teaching. Pupils also benefit from the excellent use of black and white boards by many teachers. Questioning is used well and sometimes very well, to consolidate learning and explore issues, providing some excellent

opportunities for pupils to articulate their ideas and engage in discussion with the teacher and each other, on occasion making valuable contributions to knowledge and understanding, such as in a discussion about the various layers of the earth's atmosphere and their purposes. In the great majority of lessons, teachers maintain a good pace of learning and manage the transition from one activity to another well, so that there is no decline in pace. In the best lessons, teachers generate great enthusiasm and a sense of real excitement amongst pupils, engaging them intensely in activities, with learning progressing at a driving pace.

Marking and assessment have improved since the last inspection. It is notably good in the upper school, making a valuable contribution to pupils' progress in learning, with pupils particularly appreciative of target-setting. Lower down the school the quality of marking and assessment is more variable. Much of it is good and helps improve pupils' learning, but there are instances where few comments are written so that pupils are not always clear about the progress that they have made. Pupils do refer positively to the quality of oral feedback that they receive. One area which has often proved difficult in terms of monitoring and assessing progress is subject learning in main lessons. The school has now addressed this issue by developing subject based learning profiles to be completed for main lessons, which will indicate clearly pupils' progress and achievement. These have only recently been introduced, particularly in the lower school, so it is too early to reach a judgement about their effectiveness, but they do indicate a continuing determination to improve the effectiveness of marking and assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress across the school. In tandem with this development, a stronger focus on achievement has been introduced in the child studies that are used to review all aspects of individual pupils' development by the college of teachers.

### **The quality of the curriculum**

The curriculum is of good quality and meets all regulatory requirements. It is broad, balanced and coherent, which ensures that pupils have good learning opportunities across a very broad range of educational experiences, with particular strengths in the aesthetic and creative arts. Since the last inspection the school has improved its provision for information and communications technology (ICT) and pupils in Classes 8 and 9 have specific ICT lessons, in line with the Steiner curriculum guidelines. There are numerous examples of pupils in the upper school using ICT for various purposes, particularly for research. The provision for pupils with SEND, including those with formal EHC plans, is thorough and very effective. This includes their early identification, the sharp diagnosis of needs and close monitoring and support to address them. This reflects the close and effective collaboration between the learning support team and class and subject teachers. Provision for able, gifted and talented pupils has improved since the last inspection, but still lacks the detailed diagnosis and close tracking of progression of the SEND provision. The curriculum for the 5 to 6-year olds has been further developed since the last inspection, so that it provides learning experiences that are suitably challenging and ensure that they continue to develop personally and intellectually.

The curricular provision for pupils in the upper school is excellent. It is unusually broad because the school has been determined to retain curriculum breadth and,

in particular, the focus on pupils' aesthetic and creative and personal development, which is such a strong feature of Steiner education. This allows pupils to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding across an unusually wide range of educational experiences. One way in which this is achieved is by allowing pupils to take their GCSE courses over three years rather than two. A notable feature of the provision is the non-examined activities delivered through a modular structure that includes a very diverse range of activities, from gymnastics, archery and dance through to pottery, drama and jewellery making. An unusual feature is also that across the upper school pupils work in mixed-age groups in the majority of modules. This aspect of the curriculum is much appreciated by pupils and their parents.

Lower down the school, as in the upper school, the curriculum is much enhanced by a wide range of trips and visits, participation in local music and drama festivals, together with plays, concerts and other activities put on by pupils, parents and the local community. Classes 8 and 9 pupils achieve great success in Duke of Edinburgh bronze and silver awards and Class 7 does the Elm award.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. By the time they leave the school, pupils have become confident, thoughtful, polite and engaging. They are mature and articulate in conversation and not afraid to express their views, academically and socially. They are reliable, accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and contribute positively to the school community, to the local area and wider society in general.

Pupils come into the main school from the kindergarten with good age appropriate self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem. This is built upon very effectively as they move through the school, reflecting the ethos of the school and its great emphasis on the personal development of the individual, which is very much reflected in teaching, learning and the curriculum. This approach also encourages strongly pupils' wider spiritual development, such as imagination, harmony and aesthetic appreciation.

Through the many aspects of the curriculum, which is so strong in its aesthetic and creative arts provision and in the attention given to cultural and religious diversity in many subjects, pupils develop a wide range of cultural interests and awareness. These are further enhanced by assemblies, visiting speakers and their own personal backgrounds, together with a wide variety of trips and visits to museums and galleries and the frequent putting on of plays, concerts and other activities for parents and the local community.

Pupils' social development is also a strong feature. From an early age they are expected to take responsibility for their own actions, learn how to collaborate well in small groups and be courteous and respectful to others. As they move through the school they become increasingly able to make informed decisions and choices about how to live their own lives and how to make a full and integrated contribution to society. They make friends easily and have excellent relationships with each other and with their teachers, based on mutual trust and respect. Older

pupils help to look after younger pupils and organise activities for them as part of their contribution to the development of a strong sense of community throughout the school. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and various other outdoor activities, expectations of teachers, the regular dramatic activities and concerts the school puts on and visits and trips abroad, encourage pupils to develop leadership skills, think creatively and develop their social skills. Taking part in 'Operating Theatre Live', an interactive medical experience in which pupils were immersed in the experience of an operating theatre as participants, with its attendant pressures and traumas, and later discussions significantly extended upper school pupils' understanding of the medical profession, hospitals, illness and the National Health Service; all highly topical. They also learn much about many other current major issues such as Brexit, sexual health, drugs, LGBT and other human rights, refugees and mental health. They develop a good general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England and the UK as well as understanding the responsibilities of citizenship.

The pupils develop strong moral values that help to guide their actions from an early age. They show tolerance and understanding for each other and celebrate and respect their own and other cultures, as well as the varied beliefs, views and lifestyles of a culturally diverse society through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme. Through assemblies, a range of subjects and the variety of experiences of their own peers, they come to understand and celebrate religious and cultural diversity as well as the importance of ethical questions, human rights and equality issues.

The school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils learn quickly to distinguish right from wrong and develop respect for the civil and criminal law of the land. They understand the making and applying of law and can offer balanced and non-partisan views of politics. In this they have been helped by the values of the school, discussions about democracy and visits to the Houses of Parliament, as well as talks from local MPs and other politicians representing different political parties. Older pupils also experience democracy in action through the process of becoming members of the school council and its work in the school, such as recently reorganising the upper school day.

Pupils are well placed to make choices about the next stage of their education, training and employment with the help of a well-organised careers education and guidance programme, including being able to draw upon the experience of a member of staff who has been a professional careers adviser. This allows them to make informed choices about their future.

### **3. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The safeguarding of pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Trustees work closely with senior managers to ensure that all the independent school standards are met. Although the use of computers is not a regular feature of lower school life, the school has developed an appropriate e-safety programme for all pupils which enables them to stay safe online and know how to use electronic media safely.

The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has up-to-date inter-agency level training, is experienced, has established good relationships with other agencies, such as the Local Children's Safeguarding Board, and is ably supported by her deputies, drawn from various sections of the school. She is well supported also by the trustee with responsibility for safeguarding, who has relevant training and experience. Staff receive regular and effective update training, have all read and understood the latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education, know the pupils very well and generally maintain an appropriate vigilance about safeguarding matters.

The school has very clear and rigorous procedures for the safe recruitment and vetting of all personnel. All the relevant information is recorded clearly on the single central register. The supporting evidence about the suitability of staff is full, detailed and kept in very well ordered confidential staff files. Sufficient staff and trustees have done safer recruitment training to ensure that any recruitment panel always includes someone with the requisite training.

Staff know the pupils very well, are trusted by them and have excellent relations with them, so the welfare of pupils is actively supported. The school has effective policies to promote good behaviour and challenge bullying. Pupils say there is very little bullying and when it happens is dealt with quickly and effectively by friends and staff. The bullying file supports very much what pupils say. The school, drawing on Prevent training, has developed effective strategies to combat any form of extremism, including radicalisation which is antithetical to the school's emphasis on Christian moral values, open discussion and strong support for democracy.

There are regular meetings with parents to discuss how they can keep their children safe from harm when using electronic devices, and the school provides helpful training for pupils in e-safety. Class 8 pupils referred to the effectiveness of this training in discussion with an inspector. The school has also developed and delivered an age-appropriate e-safety programme for younger pupils so that all pupils are helped to understand the dangers associated with the online world and how to use electronic media safely. The school has involved parents in these developments and provided information for them.

The school has an appropriate health and safety policy, which is implemented effectively. It regularly monitors the safety of premises and accommodation and has ensured that detailed and perceptive risk assessments have been carried out for all buildings and on-site activities, as well as those involving visits and trips, which are exemplary in their quality. The trustee with the relevant responsibility monitors all of this closely and meets regularly with the bursar and reviews minutes of the health and safety committee meetings. In this committee records of accidents and other incidents are discussed and reviewed to ensure that proper procedures are in place to minimise the risk to pupils and staff. All the appropriate tests of electrical equipment have been carried out on a regular basis. Fire safety regulations are complied with fully and fire evacuation drills are carried out regularly, with records indicating swift evacuation to the safe points. Staff are suitably vigilant to minimise risks, whatever the activity.

There is an appropriate first-aid policy, which is implemented effectively. Most staff have relevant first-aid training, including paediatric first-aid for those staff responsible for kindergarten and nursery children. Medical facilities ensure that sick pupils can be kept safe and well supervised and the facilities allow for the private examination of pupils if necessary. The school admissions and attendance registers are properly maintained, in line with regulatory requirements, and any unexplained pupil absences are followed up promptly.

#### **4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

Leadership, management and governance are good and have improved significantly since the last inspection. They aim to ensure that the school meets all the independent school standards, whilst remaining true to the principles of Steiner education and the school's aims. The bursar and education lead have appropriate roles and responsibilities, clearly defined in their job descriptions, as do the chair of college and the department leads. This group of staff form the coordination group, which is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and for implementing improvements identified in the well-focused and helpful school development plan. This group is effective in carrying out its roles and responsibilities and has a fully coherent programme of development and accountability. The appraisal system for performance management has become more effective since the last inspection, with all members of the senior management team, as well as other staff, now being assessed through clear and appropriate job descriptions in a rigorous and professionally helpful manner. Senior managers also work closely with the trustees, who exercise a tight monitoring and oversight of the work of the school. At the same time, staff have sustained their success in promoting pupils' well-being and achievement, so that they feel safe and happy at school, whilst making good progress across the wide variety of educational experiences that constitute Steiner education.

The premises and accommodation support teaching and learning well. The extensive grounds provide a pleasant social environment for pupils and a valuable learning resource. Parents are well informed about the progress, achievements and personal development of their children through regular meetings with teachers and helpful written reports. Teachers and senior managers make themselves available at other times if parents request. Parents are kept well informed about various aspects of the school's activities through an interesting newsletter and the school's website, which also includes a wide range of the school's policies. The school has a comprehensive and detailed complaints policy with all the appropriate procedures. The one formal complaint in recent times was resolved successfully, having followed the complaints procedures meticulously.

##### **Governance**

Governance of the school is good. The registered company which owns the school has delegated its running to a council of trustees, who work very closely with staff and hold the ultimate responsibility of the school in all its aspects. The council is led by a new acting chair since the last inspection and it now monitors closely all aspects of the regulatory requirements, with a much sharper oversight

of the school's provision. Individual trustees have specific responsibility for various aspects of the independent school standards, which they exercise effectively, including regular contact with relevant staff and visits to the school, together with checks of relevant documentation. The acting chair monitors the work of her fellow trustees closely to ensure that they are carrying out their monitoring and oversight functions effectively. She also keeps close oversight of all aspects of provision, is in the school frequently and monitors closely the work of senior managers and school developments in a rigorous and positive manner. As a result, the council carries out well its responsibilities for ensuring that the school meets all the independent school standards.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS' PROVISION**

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Provision for three to five-year olds is good. Children in the nursery and kindergarten classes make good progress in their learning and development. Safeguarding and welfare arrangements and leadership and management are good and parents have been well involved in workshops on e-safety.

The leadership and management of the nursery and kindergarten classes are good and effective. The EYFS lead is new in post since the last inspection and works well with a dedicated team of teachers and assistants. They have a clear view of the strengths of provision and where improvements can be made; as a result, their self-evaluation is accurate. This clarity is aided by a clear system for the support and training of staff which in turn aids the effective arrangements for supervision. In line with Steiner philosophy, there is a strong focus on democracy. This underpins the promotion of British values and the children's understanding of fairness and of right from wrong. Such values serve the children well in protecting them from radicalisation and extremism.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers plan well for the children's different needs and abilities. The children have many opportunities for self-directed learning and teachers intervene as appropriate to support their progress. The ongoing observational assessments of the children's achievements are recorded effectively and shared with parents, so they have a clear view of their child's progress over time. Support for children with SEND is good. The staff implement support plans in consultation with parents and regularly review how well things are going. The lead intends to develop this further in order to evaluate and record the impact of action taken upon the children's learning and achievement. The partnerships established with parents are of high quality. This makes a very positive contribution to how well the children settle into the nursery and kindergarten classes. All parents of children in these classes who returned questionnaires to the inspection team strongly agree that they are happy with the good quality of provision that their children receive.

The quality of the provision to promote the children's personal development and assure their welfare is good. Children are enthusiastic about the activities available to them; they learn to share, take turns and care for one another. They are confident helpers in the preparation of 'little lunch', and through this activity and the sharing of the healthy food they make, they learn about the importance of

a healthy diet. The children understand the need to keep safe, for example, when they use knives as observed to butter bread or rice cakes. They are equally safety conscious when they use scissors in the classroom or are outdoors and climbing on the lower branches of a tree in the 'little garden' or sweeping snow off the path! The staff respond to the children's questions with sensitivity in all aspects of keeping children safe.

Outcomes for children, including those with SEND, are good. This is particularly evident in the children's manipulative skills and personal development. The learning environment of the classes prioritises oracy and so the children's communication and social skills are similarly well developed. During the social setting of 'little lunch' the children conversed with confidence with each other and with the adults who sat around the table with them to share this occasion. Through such activities and the positive impact upon the children's development, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education in the school.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School			
Address of school:	Love Lane Stourbridge DY8 2EA			
Telephone number:	01384 394633			
Email address:	<a href="mailto:info@elmfield.com">info@elmfield.com</a>			
Web address	<a href="http://www.elmfield.co.uk">www.elmfield.co.uk</a>			
Proprietor:	Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School Ltd			
Acting Chair of the Council of Management	Sharon Rose			
Head Teacher:	Diana Ball – Education Lead			
Early Years Manager	Rebecca Jenkins-Handy – Early Years Lead			
DfE Number	332/6000			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	£5070 - £7800			
Age range of pupils	3-17			
Gender of pupils	Boys/Girls			
Total number on roll	full-time	220	part-time	51
Number of children in registered nursery				0
Number of children under 5	Boys:	21	Girls:	30
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	100	Girls:	105
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	7	Girls:	8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	2	Girls:	1
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Boys:	2	Girls:	5
Type of inspection	Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008			

**This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, and members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship or Cognita group. The report is available from the School Inspection Service website: [www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk](http://www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk).**