



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

INSPECTION REPORT FOR ELMFIELD RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL

DfE No: 332/6000

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

The quality of education	good	2
Pupils' personal development	good	2
Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety	inadequate	4
Leadership, management and governance	requires improvement	3
Effectiveness of the Early Years' provision	good	2

Compliance with the Independent School Standards:

The school does not meet 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: 30 September – 2 October 2015

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School provides a good education for its pupils, which fulfils the school's aims well. The curriculum has many strengths, of which the most notable are the breadth of the educational experiences it offers across all years and particularly for older pupils, together with the quality of its provision in the creative and performing arts. The one less well developed area is information and communications technology (ICT). The teaching is good: all pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well, including in external examinations. The marking of pupils' work remains variable in quality, as it was at the time of the last inspection. A recently introduced assessment framework is providing clear information about pupils' achievements. Their personal development is good overall and excellent in relation to spiritual and moral development. Behaviour is good and has improved since the last inspection. Cultural development is good. Pupils are interested in other cultures and religions and committed to British values of democracy, and the rule of law, but they are not particularly knowledgeable about the changing nature of British society. Pupils feel safe, secure and happy in the school, but there are some significant weaknesses in the school's implementation of risk assessment which could compromise pupils' health and safety. The single central register (SCR) includes all the requisite information, but is bulky to read as a single document because it also contains other information which, although useful to the school, is not strictly required by the regulations. Trustees work well with senior managers and have been successful in moving the school on since the last inspection, but trustees do not monitor closely enough the implementation of school policies to ensure that independent standards are consistently met. The school has a clear and appropriate development plan, but the roles and responsibilities of the chair of college and chairs of department have not yet been fully agreed, which hinders the effective implementation of policy. The Early Years provision is good, the Early Years department is well managed, children are safe, secure, enjoy their education and make consistent progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

To meet the independent school standards, the proprietor must:

- ensure that risk assessments are implemented effectively to reduce risks to pupils' health and safety, (paragraphs 16 (a) and (b)); and
- ensure that leaders and managers fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently, (paragraph 34 (1)(b)).

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- involve trustees more closely in monitoring compliance with regulations;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of all those in management positions and how they should contribute to improving the school;
- improve the quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work; and
- further develop ICT in the curriculum.

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). It was conducted by three independent professional inspectors, who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations, and a trained lay inspector, who looked at agreed aspects of the school's organisation and maintenance of ethos.

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors observed a range of subject lessons across all key stages and examined samples of pupils' work in all key stages. The school's curriculum documentation, policies and records were scrutinised. Interviews were held with a number of staff in key positions and the inspectors spoke to groups of pupils. They also took account of the questionnaires completed by pupils and parents before the inspection.

The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mr Ted Cohn
Team inspectors:	Mr Tony Hubbard Ms Linda Kelsey
Lay inspector:	Mrs Helen Weatherhead

The school follows the Steiner Waldorf system for naming classes. The corresponding National Curriculum nomenclature for the classes in the school at the time of the inspection is as follows:

Steiner Class Names	National Curriculum
Early Years department	EYFS, Year 1
Class 1	Year 2
Class 2	Year 3
Class 3	Year 4
Class 4	Year 5
Class 5	Year 6
Class 6	Year 7
Class 7	Year 8
Class 8	Year 9
Class 9	Year 10
Class 10	Year 11
Class 11	Year 12

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School is an independent co-education school for pupils aged 3 to 17 years old. It follows the international Steiner Waldorf curriculum and has as its aim to provide an outstanding, engaging, age-appropriate education, which develops creative, confident, socially responsible citizens of the future, able to respond to the challenges of modern life. The Early Years provision has been granted exemptions from aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage relating to language and communication and knowledge and understanding of the world, together with some partial exemptions and exemption from the completion of the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. The school opened in 1934 and moved to its present attractive site in 1946. In addition to the two original houses on the site, several buildings have been purpose built or converted to provide specialist accommodation for subjects such as science, the crafts and eurythmy. The council of trustees has management and oversight responsibilities similar to those of a governing body. The school has no headteacher and so the responsibilities of senior management are exercised by the business and educational managers and the chair of the college of teachers, in consultation with the council of trustees.

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good overall and includes some outstanding features. It meets all the regulatory requirements and provides a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum for pupils, which ensures that they have good learning opportunities across a very broad range of educational experiences and meets the aims of the school and Steiner education well.

The development of linguistic, mathematical, human and social and physical knowledge and skills is good, whilst those in the creative, aesthetic and practical areas are developed very well because of the broad ranging and high quality learning experiences provided for pupils across all age groups. Less attention has been paid to the development of technological skills, particularly those related to ICT, and, whilst compliant, this is a less well developed area of learning experience. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those with formal statements of need, is thorough and very effective, with careful analysis of pupils' needs and well-focused support for pupils and staff. Provision for able, gifted and talented pupils is more uneven in quality, but still good overall.

The curricular provision for pupils in the upper school, Classes 9 to 11, has unusual breadth. The notable feature of which is a wide range of non-examined activities delivered through 90 minute modules each morning of the week. The activities are as diverse as preparing a play for performance at the local Shakespeare Festival and choreography to cooking, pottery, gardening, scientific drawing, candle and jewellery making, with pupils taking four modules a term. An unusual feature of these modules is that pupils from different year groups work together. This provision is greatly appreciated by the pupils. The policy of having a three-year GCSE programme to accommodate non-examined provision also helps to ensure that pupils achieve high levels of success in their examinations. In Classes 7 and 8 the curriculum is enhanced by pupil participation in the Castle and Duke of Edinburgh bronze award schemes. The early and middle school curriculums have a rich variety of activities, with a particular focus on the aesthetic and creative arts, benefiting from the relatively long timetabled hours for the curriculum.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment is good overall. Most of the teaching is good and some of it is excellent, particularly in the upper school morning modules and in the creative and performing arts, where teaching has verve and a driving pace, engaging pupils intensively in learning and leading to high standards of work. In a few lessons the teaching is less than good and here the pace can be pedestrian and able pupils in particular are not always fully challenged.

Lessons are well planned: teachers have a good and sometimes excellent command of their material, the purposes of lessons are clear and shared with

pupils. Explanations are clear and several excellent examples of storytelling were observed. Usually instructions are clear and concise and pupils settle quickly to tasks set, which generally are effective in consolidating and taking learning on. Questioning is also used well and sometimes very well to consolidate learning and explore issues. The teaching creates frequent opportunities for pupils to collaborate with each other and develop their speaking and listening skills in a range of different contexts very effectively, through small group work, class discussions and presentations. The frequent opportunities to take part in choral speaking and singing also play an important part in this process.

The learning support team provides helpful analyses of the particular learning and/or behavioural issues of individual pupils and well-focused advice and support for class and subject teachers. Well briefed teaching assistants work closely with teachers in an effective partnership, which helps to ensure that these pupils make consistently good and sometimes excellent progress in their learning. Pupils with formal statements of need are well catered for, with all the necessary requirements carried out. Resources are stretched because of increased numbers of pupils with SEND since the last inspection, but the extra staffing provided has had a beneficial effect on provision.

Marking remains variable, as at the time the last inspection. There are various examples of constructive and effective marking, particularly in the upper school, but other examples of marking which do little more than acknowledging that work has been completed and contribute little to pupils' progress. Several older pupils commented upon how helpful they had found the setting of targets, as part of the marking process, in subjects where this is been done. Progress has been made on developing an effective framework for assessment and the recently introduced framework for assessment is improving the tracking of pupils' achievement.

Teaching and the ethos of the school strongly support British values, with an emphasis on Christian moral values, tolerance and respect for other cultures.

Pupils' learning and achievement

Overall pupils make good progress in their learning and this is particularly noticeable for pupils with SEND across the school and in the upper school, where pupils build effectively upon the learning skills and good work habits developed lower down the school. There are various examples of the most able making good and sometimes excellent progress, but in some lessons they are not being fully challenged.

Achievement is particularly good in oracy, literacy and the creative arts, reflecting the excellent learning opportunities provided in the curriculum. Pupils achieve high levels of success in GCSE examinations, both in relation to grades A* to C and higher grades.

2. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The quality of pupils' personal development is good, with some excellent features. Personal, social, health and economic education is embedded effectively in the curriculum and assemblies. Pupils develop the knowledge and

skills related to the various elements well and sometimes very well, for example through mathematics for life and tasks set for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. The school places a strong emphasis on healthy living in its education and pupils learn what constitutes healthy eating and how to cook healthy meals. They also learn about sustainable farming and how to grow fruit and vegetables and about sources of sustainable energy production. The school has an appropriate careers education and guidance programme, which is supplemented by well-organised work experience and informed and impartial guidance about future choices when they leave the school.

The spiritual development of pupils is outstanding, reflecting the values and aims of Steiner education. Many opportunities are provided across the curriculum for the development of spiritual understanding and the Michaelmas Festival, taking place during the inspection, was an uplifting spiritual experience, created by the nature of the activities and the quality of pupils' performances.

Teachers treat pupils with respect and courtesy, which helps to enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence. The critically reflective approach that is encouraged by teachers helps pupils to become self-reflective and critical. The success of this approach was clearly demonstrated in the thoughtful and reflective way in which pupils talked about their educational experiences in the school. From an early age the pupils are clearly aware of right and wrong and the need to behave in a considerate manner in order to respect the rights of others. They have a good understanding of the need for laws and the close observance of them. Pupils also develop the ability to argue and debate issues logically and effectively because of the opportunities provided to do this; a key skill for a citizen in a democracy.

Social development is good and pupils become mature and responsible young adults, aware of their responsibilities in school and the wider world. They enjoy acting as mentors for younger pupils and see this as a way in which they can contribute to the community. Older pupils appreciate the Upper School Council and use it to express opinions and make suggestions for change. At the time of the last inspection there was some low-level disruption in several classes, which indicated that social development had not always been successful. The school has implemented behaviour policies to address this and such behaviour was greatly reduced at the time of this inspection.

Pupils learn much about societies, their values, faiths and beliefs across space and time. Many subjects contribute to developing cultural understanding, such as art, English, geography, history, cookery and drama. This development is further enhanced through local visits and visits from pupils in Steiner schools in other countries. Parents and others also make a valuable contribution to understanding of a diverse range of cultural traditions and practices. Pupils' understanding of the diverse and changing nature of the United Kingdom and its constituent parts is less well developed.

3. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety, despite many good features for their personal care and support, is inadequate overall. This is because the implementation and monitoring of sound school policies for health and safety and risk assessment are insufficiently rigorous, and this could place pupils in the main school at risk.

The school's safeguarding arrangements have some strong features, but do not comply with all the regulations for independent schools. There is a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) with up to date interagency training, who carries out her role very effectively. The staff have had appropriate safeguarding training and understand the school's procedures. The DSL is well supported by a trustee who oversees and is made aware of issues as soon as necessary. The business manager has a specialist degree in human resources, including the safe recruitment of staff. The Single Central Register (SCR) contains all the necessary information. The school's process for checking the suitability of staff to work with children is thorough and searching, but because it contains additional information, the SCR is a bulky document which is difficult to handle.

Staff know their pupils extremely well, both as learners and as young people. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally excellent. Pupils say they feel safe and that they would feel able to approach a member of staff with a worry or personal problem. The school has sound policies to promote good behaviour and to challenge bullying and careful records of any allegations or incidents are kept and followed up with staff as needed. Pupils do not think bullying is a problem and any incidents are usually effectively dealt with. The school has developed an effective Prevent strategy, which helps to make pupils aware of the dangers of extremism and how to avoid them. It has also collaborated well with the local police force in dealing with e-safety.

The arrangements for health and safety meet most but not all the regulations. Arrangements for fire safety are in place. Regular checks are made of classrooms and other parts of the school, including commissioning a commercial survey. However, the school's response to some of the issues raised in this survey were inadequate, particularly the immediate removal of a dangerous liquid from a practical area and the security of the science preparatory room, because staff failed to carry out actions requested of them and managers did not check that they had done so. By the end of the inspection robust action had been taken to address these issues.

Arrangements for first aid and medical care meet the requirements. Fire drills are conducted regularly. Any issues are recorded and dealt with. The school was not compliant with regard to fire notices, clearly identifying fire exits at the start of the inspection, but is now. The registers of admission and attendance are well maintained and compliant. The school complies with the requirements of the 2010 equalities legislation.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Despite considerable strengths, the leadership and management of the school require improvement because they have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are consistently met. The business manager, educational manager, chair of the college of teachers, together with the chairs of upper and

lower schools and the Early Years department, form the coordination group, which is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and for implementing improvements, such as those identified in the school development plan. The business and education managers and the chair of college report regularly to the council of trustees on their work and issues arising from it, which plays an important part in keeping the council informed about progress towards targets in the school development plan and any issues in the school.

The business and education managers have clear roles and responsibilities identified in their job descriptions, some of which are closely linked to particular aspects of the school development plan. The roles and responsibilities of the chair of the college of teachers and the chairs of each department of the school, exercised collegiately, are not defined and until this happens a fully coherent programme of development and accountability will be difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, the school has made considerable progress in leadership and management since the last inspection, for instance by producing a more focused and effective school development plan, establishing a more effective behaviour policy that has reduced instances of misbehaviour in classes, developing a clear and well organised appraisal system for performance management and thoughtful and effective strategies to promote and reinforce British values, whilst discouraging extremism.

Trustees and staff in senior management positions are fully aware of the independent school regulations introduced in January 2015. Nevertheless, they have not monitored the implementation of school policies closely enough to ensure that pupils' safety is not at risk, for example from hazardous substances left around carelessly in practical areas of the school. They have also failed to ensure that the SCR is available for scrutiny as an easily readable document or addressed successfully the weaknesses in teachers' marking identified at the time of the last inspection. In all other respects leadership and management are clearly successful in promoting pupils' well-being and achievement, so that they feel safe and happy at school and make good progress in their learning across a very broad range of educational experiences, which reflect well the principles and purpose of Steiner education.

The premises and accommodation support teaching and learning well and the beautiful and extensive grounds provide excellent opportunities for outdoor learning experiences and the enjoyment of the delights of nature and the changing seasons. Parents are kept well informed about school events and the educational achievement and personal development of their children, which they appreciate, and express high levels of satisfaction with their children's education, although a small minority would like more information about the roles and responsibilities of staff. The school has a comprehensive and thorough complaints policy. Recent complaints have followed the school's procedures meticulously and have all been resolved satisfactorily.

Governance

The registered company which owns the school has delegated the running of the school to a council of trustees, who work closely with senior staff and hold the ultimate responsibility for the school in all its aspects. The trustees are aware of

the new independent school regulations introduced in January 2015 and other regulatory guidance such as the Prevent strategy, for which they have helped the school make good provision. They do not monitor the implementation of policies as well as they do their other work and in particular do not always respond speedily and effectively to any provision which represents a breach of regulations and puts children in danger. They do, however, ensure that the school remains true to its aims and the precepts of Steiner education.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS' PROVISION

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years provision is good. All children make good progress in their learning and development, whatever their starting points. Staff know the children very well and support their personal and emotional development very effectively, so that they feel very safe, secure and happy at school. The requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare have been fully met and the staff have a good shared understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding. Through meetings, ongoing dialogue, including with parents, and appraisal, practice is being constantly evaluated and improved, so improving pupils' education. The documentation to clarify roles and responsibilities and accountability is limited and resulted in some initial confusion about the role of the chair of Early Years department and whether any staff had paediatric first aid training during the inspection.

The leadership and management of the EYFS are good. The chair of the Early Years department, which incorporates EYFS children and 5 to 6-year-olds, is highly experienced and very familiar with both the relevant EYFS regulations from which the school is not exempt and the Steiner ethos in principle and practice. She has overall responsibility for the curriculum, teaching and learning, which she exercises collegially through robust discussion and debate, leading to clear and appropriate decision-making. In ensuring the safeguarding of the children, the chair works very closely with her colleagues and the school's DSL in a highly effective partnership. The school has recently introduced a new appraisal system that involves peer, internal and external appraisal, but it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

The quality of teaching, learning and achievement is good. The teaching staff are experienced and well-qualified, with a very secure understanding of the children they teach. This understanding is significantly enhanced through continuing informal interaction in the weekly meetings of staff, which focus on the educational and social development of individual children and how to further facilitate this. The continuing dialogue with parents also extends and develops this understanding very effectively, which is reflected in the very high levels of satisfaction that parents expressed about all aspects of the children's education and well-being in the questionnaires returned to inspectors for the beginning of the inspection. The teaching staff have high expectations of their children socially and educationally, which is reflected in their planning and curriculum. The quality of assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection and it is now clearly effective in tracking children's progress and informing future planning. Staff work closely with the learning support team in addressing the needs of children with specific learning difficulties or disabilities. Children become

confident learners, gaining much from experimenting and testing out ideas through well-structured play activities that encourage initiative and fruitful collaboration, for instance in playing with sand and water. They become good at working things out for themselves and develop good and sometimes very good skills in weaving, painting and modelling, as well as learning how to carry out other practical tasks such as preparing vegetables for soup and making bread. Children make good progress from their individual starting points and really enjoy their education.

British values are actively encouraged through the courteous and calm conduct of staff and the standards of courtesy that children are expected to follow, in order to establish and sustain a harmonious community in which children take an active part. The staff are very successful in promoting the welfare of the children and are very much aware of the need to protect them from radicalism and extremism, whilst ensuring that arrangements to protect children meet all the necessary statutory and other requirements.

SECTION A: INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Name of school:	Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School			
Address of school:	14 Love Lane Stourbridge DY8 2EA			
Telephone number:	01384394633			
Email address:	info@elmfield.com			
Web address	www.http://elmfield.com/			
Proprietor:	Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School Ltd			
Education Administrator:	Diana Ball			
Chair of Early Years Department	Jackie Irving			
DfE Number	332/6000			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	£4500 - £7500			
Age range of pupils	3 - 17			
Gender of pupils	Mixed			
Total number on roll	full-time	214	part-time	38
Number of children under 5	Boys:	21	Girls:	17
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	113	Girls:	86
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	9	Girls:	6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	2	Girls:	2
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Boys:	8	Girls:	7
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.schoolinspectionservice.co.uk