

Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley

Langley Hill, Kings Langley WD4 9HG

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- Safeguarding arrangements were judged to be met in the previous monitoring inspection. Inspectors from the School Inspection Service found that the school had established a clear culture and understanding of safeguarding through extensive training for staff and trustees. The staff code of conduct had been updated to include clear expectations for appropriate boundaries between adults and pupils. Pupils were well informed about safeguarding matters.
- Her Majesty's Inspectors found serious weaknesses in the school's management of safeguarding. The school has revised its safeguarding and child protection policies to reflect the Department for Education's statutory guidance, and they are available on the school's website. Staff, trustees and the designated safeguarding leads have received recent, appropriate training. However, school managers and trustees have not ensured that the policies and procedures for safeguarding are followed diligently.
- Managers and trustees do not check regularly to ensure that agreed systems and policies are implemented consistently by all staff. Concerns raised by staff or parents about pupils and adults are not followed up quickly. Allegations are not investigated as a priority to avoid any delay in line with the Department's statutory guidance on timescales outlined in 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2016.
- Record-keeping of important and sensitive information is extremely weak, making vital information difficult to retrieve. The school does not keep records of the destinations of pupils who sign out when they leave the premises during the school day, for example at lunchtime. Their whereabouts are, therefore, unknown. Case files for individual pupils are not raised routinely to keep a detailed chronology of events. Sensitive information on pupils is stored on personal computers. Dates for the completion of work undertaken in relation to safeguarding and child protection are missing.
- The designated leads for safeguarding and child protection are trained to the right level and have the necessary knowledge and seniority to lead on safeguarding matters. Nonetheless, they describe their work as 'fire-fighting' on a daily basis because they are teaching or dealing with the day-to-day management of the school. Not enough time is dedicated to safeguarding. It does not have a suitably high priority. Much of their work is duplicated without one single point of reference overseeing each case, and this causes delays.
- Several of the 39 formal complaints received from parents in the previous school year relate to safeguarding. They reflect a high level of dissatisfaction and concern among those parents about the school's management of safeguarding.

- The local authority's designated officer for safeguarding confirmed that the school's management of safeguarding is not robust enough. In particular, panel hearings thus far, concerning allegations against staff and stage 3 complaints, have lacked independent representation. The policy is now clear that at least two persons will be independent members of the panel. The identified independent members are not parents or staff members. However, they are associated with the Rudolf Steiner movement.
- The majority of responses to the staff questionnaires are positive and confirm a view that the school is starting to improve. Pupils that spoke to inspectors confirmed that they know how to keep themselves safe and that they know who to go to with any concerns. They say that they are safe – but they are not, because of flaws in the school's systems and procedures for safeguarding and child protection. Some parents shared their concerns with inspectors about the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management; others felt that they are effective.
- The newly formed management team, trustees and college members (staff employed by the school and accountable to the trustees) communicate a strong desire to make the necessary changes to meet the independent school standards and to keep pupils safe. Their good intentions have not led to discernible improvement thus far.
- The standard in paragraph 7 is not met.

Paragraph 14

- The standard in this paragraph was not inspected in the previous monitoring inspection.
- The management team do take steps to deploy staff to increase the level of supervision that would be in the best interests of pupils to ensure their safety. Nonetheless, when such decisions are taken, lack of monitoring does not ensure that agreed levels of supervision are sustained.
- Inspectors found a class with one member of staff supervising when the management team had agreed, in the interest of pupils' safety, that two staff members should be present at all times.
- Levels of supervision at breaktimes are suitable.
- The standard in paragraph 14 is not met.

Paragraph 15

- The standard in this paragraph was not inspected in the previous monitoring inspection.
- Inspectors found that staff responsible for the admissions register have received no training to fulfil this duty effectively. They have no knowledge of the guidance on school attendance issued by the Department for Education, or the relevant statute that underpins it.
- Destinations for pupils who leave the school are not recorded in the admissions register. Consequently, the school is unable to check that leavers are not at risk of being missing from education. The school is not in a position to report children who are potentially missing education, as required, to the local authority in accordance with the statutory timescales.
- The standard in paragraph 15 is not met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The previous monitoring inspection by the School Inspection Service found that the school's risk assessment policy and written risk assessments, especially for school visits and residential trips, had improved. The report states that the school intended the management team to monitor arrangements for risk assessments. As this was new, the report recommended that these arrangements should be reviewed at the next inspection.
- Her Majesty's Inspectors found shortcomings in the school's approach to assessing potential risks to pupils' safety.
- Risk assessments undertaken to keep pupils safe during the school day are not always recorded in written form stating the identified risk, who is at risk, what the control measures are and if any other actions are required.
- Where actions are taken as a result of a risk assessment, for example in increasing levels of supervision, the management team do not monitor the arrangements diligently to ensure that all staff adhere to them.
- The standard in paragraph 16 is not met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33(a)–(k)

- The previous monitoring inspection found that two school complaints officers kept careful chronological records of complaints, emails and letters on file. Inspectors recommended that the school should identify and separate parental complaints from staff grievances and file them separately.
- The previous concerns and complaints officers are no longer in post. A new part-time officer has been appointed. The volume of complaints to be resolved remains high, yet the capacity to deal with them has been reduced.
- There is no separation in the filing system between parental complaints, child protection concerns and staff grievances. As a consequence, the sheer volume of information held in these files makes retrieval by those who are responsible for monitoring complaints, grievances or safeguarding concerns, too complicated. The system is inefficient. The management team has developed a spreadsheet to simplify the system but it does not record the date when complaints are resolved.
- The complaints policy is fit for purpose and available to parents. However, very few complaints are dealt with effectively at an informal stage and they move straight to the formal complaints stage. Complaints, grievances and allegations take far too long to be resolved.
- Representation on panel hearings to date has not been suitably independent.
- Scrutiny of the school's records shows that frequently timescales set in the policy for managing complaints are not adhered to. Parents are not always notified of the outcomes of their complaint.
- The school's policy is not implemented effectively.
- The standard in paragraph 33 is not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- In the previous monitoring inspection inspectors from the School Inspection Service found that, as a result of the school introducing a new management system, the standard was met. The report recommended that a further monitoring inspection should check that planned developments are made so that improvement is sustained to meet all of the independent school standards consistently.
- The school management team has received no training to date to equip them with the necessary skills in order to carry out their duties effectively. As they all carry a teaching workload, they do not have the necessary time required to monitor and improve the school's effectiveness. The school's arrangements for keeping children safe are not adequate.
- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the council of trustees has been elected who is not a teacher at the school. This was recommended in the previous inspection and it has been actioned. The chair is knowledgeable about the core functions of governance and is acutely aware of the need for changes and improvements in order to meet all of the independent school standards. Importantly, the chair recognises that effective governance has been hampered by insufficient representation of trustees external to the school. Six of the nine trustees currently are teachers or parents of pupils at the school. The chair is committed to making the necessary changes and especially prioritising and shaping the school's plans for improvement. This is work in progress.
- The previous inspection report recommends that the proportion of external trustees should be increased. This has not happened. The trustees' impartiality is reduced due to their connections with other staff members, as is their capacity to hold staff to account.
- The trustees have introduced a new structure for their own work with four committees having clear terms of reference.
- The college of teachers has stepped down from its responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school and handed this over to the newly recruited team of five school managers. The college now focuses entirely on methods and approaches used in teaching and the curriculum. It is accountable to the trustees.
- College members touch base with school managers to discuss developments casually. A formal system with planned, focused visits to look specifically at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not in place. Consequently, the college, and in turn the trustees, are overly reliant on the information they receive from the management team. They do not have the means of checking its accuracy.
- School improvement planning is in the early stages of development. In the absence of an improvement plan, managers lack an effective tool to help them to ensure that the independent school standards are all met quickly.
- Monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment lacks a cohesive approach. School managers are frequently distracted from this important aspect of their work, for example to cover staff absence. The management team are experienced teachers who are well versed in the Steiner curriculum. However, they have received no external training to help them to develop their leadership and management skills. They work cohesively as a team but currently on an operational basis only.
- The school is in the very early stages of introducing, for the first time, a system for appraising staff's performance. The management team give appropriate support to

teachers requiring additional guidance to improve their practice.

- The school's leadership and management have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. Therefore the standard in paragraph 34 is not met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's accessibility plan focuses almost exclusively on physical accessibility issues relating to the building and premises. One small section of the plan refers to training for staff so that they are able to cater for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The plan is inadequate in its content because it does not include plans for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to gain full access to the curriculum.

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. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

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

- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of staff (paragraph 14).
- The proprietor must make sure that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
- The proprietor must ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and appropriate action to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents and pupils and which contains all of the information specified in the standard (paragraph 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii), 33(k)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

School details

Unique reference number	117631
DfE registration number	919/6109
Inspection number	10023036
Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	378
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	33
Number of part-time pupils	62
Proprietor	Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley Ltd
Chair of trustees	Richard Moore
Chair of school management team	Tina Hobday
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,365–£9,520
Telephone number	01923 262 505
Website	www.rsskl.org
Email address	info@rsskl.org
Date of previous standard inspection	24–26 March 2015

Information about this school

- Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) as an independent day school for girls and boys. It occupies a large site in rural surroundings in Kings Langley in Hertfordshire. While the school is grounded in the Christian tradition, it admits pupils of any or no faith and it is non-selective.
- Almost a third of pupils in the school are identified as pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Two pupils have education, health and care plans for pupils who need more support than is available through special educational needs support.
- The school follows the philosophy and curriculum developed through the works of Rudolf Steiner. It opened in 1949 and is one of the longest established Steiner Waldorf schools in the United Kingdom. Formal aspects of learning are introduced

a year later in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum than in the national curriculum.

- The school aims to 'develop human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives'. Its priority is to provide the best possible education for its pupils so they may become not only knowledgeable, but also inwardly free, secure and creative adults.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The school is usually inspected by the School Inspection Service. In a full inspection in March 2015 the school did not meet all of the independent school standards. Subsequently, the school submitted a plan of its intended actions to the inspectorate, to meet all of the independent school standards that was accepted.
- A parental complaint in respect of safeguarding triggered an emergency inspection in March 2016. The resultant action plan was rejected by the DfE. The school submitted an amended action plan that was also rejected.
- The DfE commissioned the School Inspection Service to undertake a progress monitoring inspection in June 2016. At this inspection, inspectors found that all previously unmet standards had been met.
- A parental complaint followed publication of the report. The DfE commissioned Ofsted to complete this progress monitoring inspection, at no notice, to check that the independent school standards met in the previous inspection are still met. In particular, the Department directed inspectors to look into and report on the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors inspected the school on 2 November 2016. Inspectors were 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.
- The inspection was quality assured by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors who is Ofsted's specialist adviser for independent schools.
- Inspectors met with the school management team as a group and individually and they talked to other staff. They met with trustees, a co-chair of the college, pupils, parents and special needs coordinators. The chair of the trustees and the local authority's designated officer for child protection were contacted by telephone. Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding and child protection leads.
- Documentation about admissions, complaints and safeguarding, including files on individual pupils and information about pupils' achievement was scrutinised. The school's policies on safeguarding, child protection and complaints were seen. A search for statutory information made available on the school's website was undertaken. Inspectors checked the school's single central register and staff files that hold information about pre-employment vetting. The views of 35 staff who responded to a staff questionnaire, provided by inspectors, were taken into account.

Inspection team

Linda Killman, lead inspector
John Daniell

Her Majesty's Inspector
Her Majesty's Inspector

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