

Rudolf Steiner School

Langley Hill, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire WD4 9HG

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

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

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(g) and 3(h)

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection because teachers did not check on pupils' progress well enough. Work in lessons was not matched to pupils' different abilities so that, for example, most-able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities did not make good progress.
- Leaders have developed assessment systems for tracking the progress pupils make in their subjects. This has been more effectively developed in the upper school and in English and mathematics. However, it is still at an early stage and is yet to impact more widely on classroom practice.
- Teachers still do not plan lessons effectively. The individual needs of pupils, and particularly those who have additional learning needs, are not yet understood well enough. These pupils now have individual targets on their learning plans but these targets, along with progress information, do not inform teachers' planning. Time in lessons is not used as efficiently as it could be, with pupils left to wait too long before they are engaged in their learning.
- Leaders have effectively developed teachers' knowledge and understanding of how and why they should assess pupils' progress. They have drawn extensively on outside support and teachers have observed practice in other schools. This has ensured that teachers remain on board with improvements and with the higher expectations that are being set for teaching practice. However, this has not yet had a widespread impact on improving classroom practice.
- Leaders have not ensured that these standards are met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b), 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- These standards relate to the safeguarding of pupils at the school. They were not met at the previous inspection as leaders had failed to take decisive action to address reasonable and serious concerns raised by parents. They had failed to adequately assess risks posed by unsupervised visitors and had not completed all the required pre-

employment checks on staff.

- These standards remain unmet. Crucially, leaders do not base their decisions, at all times, on what is in the best interests of the child. This is the core principle of good safeguarding practice and a statutory requirement for all schools.
- Leaders rely too heavily on the advice of their solicitors when making some crucial safeguarding decisions. They do not consider carefully enough the potential consequences to children of the actions they then take. At the worst, they have not considered known risk factors because they are uninformed of all the facts. This is because the trustees have failed to ensure that critical information about historical safeguarding failings are discussed openly with those who need to know.
- Leaders have failed to identify that the culture of close relationships at the school puts pupils at risk. Professional boundaries between staff, parents and pupils are not maintained. Staff, including senior leaders, do not follow the school's own policies on social media access. Parents arrange for pupils to see their teachers, and former teachers, off the school site. This culture is unchanged, despite known serious safeguarding failings.
- Leaders have underplayed and misrepresented the school's safeguarding failings to parents. On more than one occasion, they have publicly stated that the failure is simply one of 'record keeping'. They have also stated that 'no transgressions or wrongdoings were found to have taken place' and have implied that former parents who expressed concerns have misrepresented the position. These messages are not supported by the inspection evidence.
- Leaders have failed to ensure that information relating to child protection is retained in line with the rules on retention of data promulgated by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. They have failed to take proper steps to save the email accounts of former staff, including those of one former leader for safeguarding.
- Records of pupils going off-site at lunchtime continue to be poorly kept. It is not always clear if pupils have returned to school. This poses a safeguarding risk.
- The current leader for safeguarding is highly thought of by school staff and she has the time and resources to fulfil her functions. She has increased the amount of training staff receive. However, her understanding of safeguarding is not comprehensive or objective enough to identify fundamental flaws in the school's culture and systems.
- Leaders have introduced a new system for compiling case files for individual children who may be at risk of harm. This has ensured that these records are now detailed, and chronologically demonstrate the actions taken by staff to involve external agencies when appropriate.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school, they know who to go to if they have any concerns and they value the school's pastoral support systems. They have few concerns about bullying, which they report is dealt with well.
- Leaders have ensured that visitors no longer have unsupervised access to the school site. All the correct employment checks on staff are now completed.
- Leaders have not ensured that these standards are met.

Paragraph 11 and 14

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection because suitable measures were not in place to escort or supervise unchecked visitors on the school site. Leaders had not addressed this failing even though it had previously been identified by inspectors in March 2015.
- These standards are now met as parents are no longer allowed on site during the school day. Pupils confirmed that this change was made following the Ofsted inspection in December 2016.

Paragraph 9 and 9(b)

- These standards relate to the effectiveness of the school's behaviour policy. These standards were not met at the previous inspection as attendance was too low at 91% and low-level disruption was prevalent in classes.
- Leaders have raised the profile of the importance of regular attendance and, overall, pupils' attendance has risen to 93% since December. However, this is still low in comparison to other schools.
- Leaders have very recently introduced a new behaviour policy, based on a stepped approach to imposing sanctions for poor behaviour in class. This has not yet been fully implemented by staff, and low-level disruption remains a feature of too many lessons.
- No one leader has overall responsibility for behaviour; it is divided between the three leaders of the kindergarten, lower and upper schools. They do not apply a shared approach to how they gather information on incidents and subsequent sanctions. Consequently, they are unable to securely evidence the effectiveness of the school's behaviour policy.
- These standards remain not met.

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

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(d); 20(6), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b(i)), 20(6)(c); 21(1), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a) and 21(7)(b)

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection because some staff had started work at the school without all of the statutory checks in place. Leaders had not adequately assessed the risks of these adults working with children. Leaders had not addressed these failings even though inspectors have identified failings in pre-employment since March 2015.
- These standards are now met. All the required checks have been undertaken, including for supply staff. Leaders have checked that no teacher is prohibited from teaching and that new members of the trustees and senior management team are not prohibited from leading an independent school. All the necessary checks are recorded on the school's single register.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection because suitable measures were not in place to escort or supervise unchecked visitors on the school site.
- This standard is now met as parents are no longer allowed on site during the school day.

Pupils confirmed that this change was made following the Ofsted inspection in December 2016.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(b), 32(3)(f)

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection as leaders had not correctly identified to parents the number of complaints received by the school in the preceding academic year.
- This standard is now met as leaders have ensured that the 39 formal complaints received by the school in 2015/2016 are accurately reported on the school's website.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection because, while the school's complaints policy met requirements, in practice it was not effectively implemented. Leaders failed to listen to parents' genuine concerns at an early stage, so they quickly escalated into formal complaints. Other long-standing formal complaints had not been resolved.
- Leaders have still not addressed a number of historical complaints. Some of these have remained unresolved for a number of years. Shortly before this inspection, parents were informed that an independent panel would be convened to hear and adjudicate these complaints. Expectations have been established that members should discharge their duties with 'honesty, declare any conflict of interest, act with objectivity and openness and be prepared to be accountable for your decisions'.
- Leaders have established a new process for dealing with parents' concerns at an early stage. This is starting to build a culture of greater openness and direct accountability. Parents appreciate this change. The new complaints manager reports weekly to the senior management team and at least two leaders check that appropriate actions are taken. Evidence shows that far fewer complaints escalate to a formal stage.
- This standard remains unmet.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection because leaders did not fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Consequently, many of the independent school standards were not met. Importantly, this included those related to safeguarding.
- Inspection records now evidence that safeguarding at the school has been ineffective for more than two years. Improvements have been too slow and not sustained over time.
- Current leaders continue to fail to keep pupils safe. They fail to risk-assess their decisions effectively, by not bearing in mind known risks or considering all the potential implications of their actions. This makes them reactive, rather than proactive, in mitigating against potential risks to children.
- While the trustees commissioned an external investigation into historical safeguarding concerns, they have not used this intelligence to ensure that school leaders act on the key findings of this report. Opportunities to improve safeguarding in the school have

been missed because leaders have failed to openly accept the failings of the past.

- The Department for Education did not require leaders to write an action plan following the previous inspection. However, leaders have worked with external support to write a whole school improvement plan. This is detailed and includes milestones, against which they can measure success. Senior leaders are clearly using these to define their roles and prioritise their work in the school. However, improvements on the ground are still slow to take effect and significant long-term weaknesses are yet to be rectified.
- Trustees have agreed new articles of association. This has enabled them to bring in a greater number of trustees who are external to the school. The balance of representation on the trustee board is now weighted away from persons directly involved in the running of the school. This is an important change. Trustees demonstrate a commitment to building greater accountability in how the school is led, managed and run.
- Trustees have appointed a member of staff to be the 'chair' of the management team. This is to all intents a headteacher position. It is clear that this appointment has clarified lines of accountability and has enabled trustees to become more strategic in their leadership of the school. This has improved communications in relation to leaders' expectations about teaching and learning, and teachers' performance management. However, the appointment was made shortly before this inspection, and therefore it is too soon to judge the wider impact of this change in leadership.
- These standards remain unmet.

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. 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.

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

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

- The proprietor must ensure that teaching at the school:
 - 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
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time
 - shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress; and
 - utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly (paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(g) and 3(h)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that these arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the written behaviour policy is implemented effectively (paragraph 9, 9(b)).
- 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 that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16, 16(a) and 16(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the complaints policy is implemented effectively (paragraph 33).
- The proprietor must ensure that leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils, so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy (paragraph 11).

- The proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff (paragraph 14).
- The proprietor ensures that all the necessary checks on staff are made to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. These checks are recorded accurately on the single central register (paragraph 18, 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(d); paragraph 20, 20(6), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b(i)), 20(6)(c); paragraph 21, 21(1), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a)) and 21(7)(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that the school premises are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
- The proprietor ensures that the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is made available to parents and, on request, to the Chief Inspector and the Secretary of State (paragraph 32(1), 32 (1)(b) and 32 (3)(f)).

School details

Unique reference number	117631
DfE registration number	919/6109
Inspection number	10035898

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	363
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	31
Number of part-time pupils	62
Proprietor	Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley Ltd
Chair of Trustees	Sarah Greenleaf
Chair of the Senior Management Team	Julian Paine
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,415 – £9,570
Telephone number	01923 262505
Website	http://rsskl.org/
Email address	langleyc@rsskl.org
Date of previous standard inspection	13–16 December 2016

Information about this school

- The Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley is registered as a mixed independent day school. The school aims to create 'knowledgeable, but also inwardly free, secure and creative adults'.

- The school does not have a headteacher. However, just prior to this inspection, trustees appointed a 'chair' to the senior management team. He is a long-standing member of the staff body.
- The school is led by a group of seven trustees who act on behalf of the proprietorial body. The previous chair of trustees resigned shortly before this inspection. He has been replaced by another member of the group.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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. The Department for Education (DfE) also commissioned inspectors to report on a number of concerns raised since the previous inspection.
- This inspection was conducted without notice to the school.
- The school was previously inspected by the School Inspection Service (SIS). This included a progress monitoring inspection in June 2016. The report of this inspection states that it was conducted without notice to the school. However, evidence found at this inspection indicates that the school may have known about the inspection the preceding week.
- Ofsted inspected the school in November 2016 and found serious safeguarding failings. This was followed by a full, standard inspection in December 2016. At this inspection, the school was judged to be inadequate and safeguarding was ineffective. Following this, the DfE issued a 'relevant restriction' to the school on 9 March 2017. This was that no new students may be admitted to the school. The school is appealing this decision.
- Inspectors observed learning across a number of classes and subjects in the school. They met formally with pupils and questioned them about behaviour and bullying. They also spoke to pupils in lessons.
- Inspectors considered 53 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 41 responses to Ofsted's parental questionnaire. They also looked at Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parental feedback.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the local authority prior to the inspection; she also spoke to a local authority officer during the inspection.
- Meetings were held with five trustees and with each member of the senior management team. Inspectors also interviewed the special educational needs coordinator, and those staff responsible for attendance and maintaining the register of employment checks.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding information including: employment records, complaints files, behaviour and sanctions records, child protection files and an external report into previous safeguarding practice. They also scrutinised the school improvement plan and other documents that demonstrated the work of leaders to improve the school.

Inspection team

Philippa Darley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Drew Crawshaw	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Yaxley	Her Majesty's Inspector

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