

Rudolf Steiner School

Langley Hill, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire WD4 9HG

Inspection dates

21–22 November 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) and 3(g)

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection as teachers' planning did not take into account the prior knowledge and achievement of pupils. Those pupils with additional learning needs were not well catered for in lessons and, consequently, progress was not good enough. Systems to assess pupils' progress were underdeveloped, particularly in the lower school and across subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The principal has quickly formed an accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching. It remains too variable across the school. Pupils' progress across classes and subjects is hampered by the inconsistent quality of teaching and the competency of some staff.
- Since September, the coordination of support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has improved. Pupils have greater access to adapted or additional resources. Teachers have greater access to professional support.
- Senior leaders have set clear expectations about how teachers should plan and organise lessons to meet the identified needs of pupils. Not all teachers have taken these requirements on board quickly enough in their daily practice. Similarly, some teachers continue to struggle to meet the learning needs of pupils, including the most able pupils.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress relies heavily on pupils' performance in standardised tests, and for a limited range of subjects.
- Teachers' ability to check on pupils learning as it develops through their lessons is at an early stage and remains weak. As a result, teachers do not adapt learning to meet pupils' needs well enough.
- In some classes, the progress of pupils has been hampered by staff absence.
- Teachers do want to improve their practice and it is clear that there is increased professional dialogue about approaches to teaching and pupils' progress. The responses to the staff questionnaire show that staff are supportive of the changes and raised expectations.
- Pupils value the new approach to teachers' feedback on how well tasks are completed

and what needs to be worked on next.

- These standards remain not met.

Paragraph 3(h)

- This standard was not met at the previous monitoring inspection as teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour were too low and low-level disruption in classes was common.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons has improved. Even though pupils may not be fully engaged in learning activities, particularly when they are too easy or uninteresting, they do not disrupt the learning that is taking place.
- This standard is now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- These standards relate to the safeguarding of pupils at the school.
- These standards were not met at the previous inspection because leaders did not act at all times on what was in the best interests of pupils. Crucial safeguarding concerns arising from external investigations were not communicated to the necessary staff, and had been publicly underplayed. The school's culture of close relationships had led to a breakdown in professional boundaries. Risk assessments were weak, for example in not checking on those pupils who left the school site during the day. Important safeguarding information had been deleted from the school's records owing to ineffective procedures relating to data retention.
- These standards are now met and safeguarding is effective.
- Since the progress monitoring inspection in May, trustees have appointed an external senior leader for safeguarding. While she is on a fixed-term contract at the school, her role is to build capacity and expertise and to securely embed safeguarding systems across all aspects of the school's work. She has made a significant, positive impact since taking up post.
- The principal and the safeguarding leader have worked intensively with staff to address the concerns raised at the May inspection. In particular, they have addressed the importance of maintaining professional boundaries within this close school community. They have addressed previously inappropriate use of social media and now appropriately assess risk for both on- and off-site activities.
- Trustees have made a public commitment to ensuring that they address historical safeguarding failings. They have appointed new trustees who have the expertise to challenge and support senior staff in this crucial area. They are not afraid to confront weaknesses or to use internal disciplinary measures where this is necessary.
- Leaders' plans to improve the school are informed by the findings of the external, independent investigations into safeguarding and complaints. They have taken appropriate steps to remedy previous failings, including breaches of confidentiality.
- At previous inspections, procedures for checking on the suitability of staff at the point of recruitment were poor. These are now secure. All new staff have been appointed following a robust interview process and detailed references have been received that

specifically address key safeguarding questions. All the required statutory checks have been made. The school's human resources manager meticulously oversees the single central register and staff files demonstrate that the school's safer recruitment policy is closely followed.

- The new policy and systems in place to secure and retain safeguarding information meet legal requirements.
- Recent referrals to local authority children's services demonstrate that leaders act quickly and appropriately to raise concerns and to put support in place for children and families at risk.
- Leaders have established a 'safe perimeter' around the school. Routines for dropping off pupils and for parents to access the site are well thought through. Pupils can no longer leave or re-enter the school site through the new electronic gates without being registered.
- The vast majority of teachers and parents who responded to the inspection's questionnaires agreed that pupils are safe in school.

Paragraph 9 and 9(b)

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection because overall attendance remained low at 93% and the new behaviour policy had not been effectively implemented. Low-level disruption in lessons was common.
- Pupils' attendance is now broadly in line with the national average for primary and secondary schools. It has increased this term and now stands at 95%. This represents an improvement over the same period last year.
- Pupils in lessons are well behaved and respectful towards their teachers. Inspectors observed some of the same classes at this inspection as had been seen in May 2017. Low-level disruption was not evident, even when learning activities failed to engage pupils fully. School records show that sanctions, such as the use of detentions for poor behaviour or incomplete homework, have decreased because behaviour has improved.
- These standards are now met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- This standard was not met at the previous inspection because, despite the improvements that had been made to the way the school handled complaints, historical concerns had not been satisfactorily rectified.
- There have been 11 complaints since the inspection in May 2017. Records show that these are dealt with appropriately, and in line with the school's complaints policy. Correspondence from senior managers is professional and demonstrates a genuine openness to deal with parental concerns. Consequently, many concerns do not reach a formal stage. All leaders, including trustees, are clear that all complaints must be handled correctly, maintaining confidentiality.
- An independent investigation into historical failings in how the school previously dealt with complaints has been concluded. Leaders' plans and actions since this investigation show they have acted swiftly on the recommendations from this investigation panel.

- Trustees and their solicitors are in open correspondence with previous complainants in order to try to find a mutually acceptable resolution to their concerns.
- This standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- These standards were not met at the previous inspection because safeguarding remained ineffective and improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment were taking too long to have a positive impact on pupils' progress across a range of subjects and classes.
- While improvements across the school have accelerated since September, teaching quality remains too variable and pupil progress is not good. The consistency by which leaders meet the standards relating to safeguarding and complaints is yet to be tested. This is because improvements are recent, and are largely reliant on new staff who are not permanent employees.
- The new board of trustees and the principal have had an immediate and substantial impact on setting the cultural direction of the school. This has been a challenge for the community but, as the staff survey shows, ultimately accepted. As one member of staff recorded, 'the resulting improvements have been convincing'.
- Leaders' public statement and apology for past mistakes denotes a genuine commitment to change. This is borne out by the improved systems and practices in the school relating to safeguarding and the handling of parental complaints.
- The board of trustees now comprises members with a range of professional expertise. They are actively involved in monitoring improvements on the ground. This has been particularly effective in securing the school's safeguarding culture and practice.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and plans for improvement focus on the right priorities – eradicating weaknesses and building on areas of strength, such as the spiritual, cultural, moral and social development of pupils. A new management structure with lines of accountability has been established. However, these changes have had a limited impact on substantially improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- These standards remain unmet

Paragraph 34(1)(c)

- This standard relates to how effectively leaders actively promote the welfare of pupils.
- This standard was not met at the previous inspection because leaders did not always give priority to the welfare of pupils when considering known safeguarding risks.
- Safeguarding at the school is now effective and all leaders demonstrate a commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils.
- This standard is now met.

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 unmet at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the 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, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e) and 3(g)).

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures 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; and
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)).

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor ensures that teaching at the school utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly (paragraph 3(h)).
- The proprietor ensures 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 ensures that good behaviour is promoted among pupils by ensuring that a written behaviour policy is drawn up and that policy is implemented effectively (paragraph 9, 9(b)).
- The proprietor ensures 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 is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16, 16(a)).
- The proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented (paragraph 33).
- The proprietor ensures that leaders and managers actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1)(c)).

School details

Unique reference number	117631
DfE registration number	919/6109
Inspection number	10043403

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	354
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	20
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley Association
Chair	Peter Harrington
Principal	Tim Byford
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,577–£9,857
Telephone number	01923 262505
Website	http://www.rsskl.org
Email address	receptionist@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'.
- Since the previous progress monitoring inspection in May 2017, a new board of trustees has been established, with a new chair of trustees. A school principal has been appointed

on a fixed-term contract, at least to the end of the 2017/18 academic year. Trustees have also appointed an external adviser on a fixed-term contract to act as the school's designated senior leader for safeguarding.

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.
- This inspection was conducted without notice to the school.
- 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. Following the progress monitoring inspection in May 2017, the DfE issued the school with a notice of de-registration. The school is appealing both of these decisions.
- Inspectors visited 11 parts of lessons as well as observing in the kindergarten.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, the new designated senior leader for safeguarding and two of the trustees, including the chair of trustees. They also met with representatives of the senior management team, the college of teachers and with the coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors spoke formally to two groups of pupils and discussed pupils' learning with them when they were in lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation and processes relating to the safeguarding of pupils. These included the checks the school makes when recruiting new staff, including a number of staff recruitment files; the admissions register and daily registration details; referrals to one local authority's children's services; minutes from senior management meetings; and training records.
- The lead inspector spoke with an officer from Hertfordshire local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised updated policies; the principal's draft evaluation of the school's effectiveness; information relating to the 2017 external examination results at GCSE and A level; and school improvement plans. These included the planned actions taken following leaders' scrutiny of the external investigations into safeguarding and the historical handling of complaints.
- Inspectors took into account the 74 responses to Parent View for the 2017/18 academic year, alongside 12 letters from parents. These included correspondence submitted directly to Ofsted at the time of the inspection.
- Inspectors also took into account the 28 responses to a confidential questionnaire made available to all staff members.

Inspection team

Philippa Darley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Heather Yaxley

Her Majesty's Inspector

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