

South Devon Steiner School

Hood Manor, Dartington, Totnes TQ9 6AB

Inspection dates

19 November 2020

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(a)-(b)

- At the time of the previous monitoring inspection in November 2019, leaders did not ensure that all safeguarding requirements were being implemented in line with government requirements. These failures included weaknesses in leaders' checks of staff prior to appointment, and other safeguarding arrangements, for example those relating to fire safety and the condition of some parts of the premises.
- Leaders, including trustees, fully acknowledge that previous weaknesses were unacceptable. Since the previous progress monitoring inspection, they have overhauled their systems to make the right changes. Trustees work closely with the school business manager to ensure that policies relating to safeguarding and pupils' welfare now meet requirements and are fully implemented.
- The reorganisation of the school's leadership team has established a 'port-folio' lead to focus on pupils' welfare, health and safety. This has ensured impact. For example, the school's single central record (SCR) now meets requirements.
- The standard is now met.

Paragraph 11, 12, 16, 16(a)-(b)

- Leaders have a written health and safety policy. They undertake regular checks to assure themselves that all health and safety policies are being implemented effectively. Leaders and trustees have commissioned specialist external audits to provide further reassurance. For example, they arranged a check to monitor the implementation of the actions arising from the recent fire risk assessment.
- Leaders have responded positively to the findings of the previous monitoring inspection to address concerns regarding fire risk and management. They have undertaken a full audit to ensure that the site complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. For example, fire routes are clearly marked. Emergency lighting and fire doors are

in full working order. Signage is illuminated and set at appropriate intervals to support swift evacuation.

- The written risk assessment policy is referenced through the school's health and safety policy.
- Leaders ensure that the school has appropriate risk assessments. These promote the welfare and safety of pupils. For example, suitable risk assessments are in place for a variety of activities, from handling or petting animals to using sharp equipment for woodcraft.
- Leaders have drafted a robust risk assessment for COVID-19 (coronavirus). They use this to minimise the risk of transmission of the disease and are implementing it fastidiously.
- The senior leadership team, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), identify pupils at risk of harm or those who need additional support as part of an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Personalised risk assessments for these pupils demonstrate how staff take additional measures to support and care for them.
- The standards in Part 3 are now met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2)(e), (3), 20(1), 20(6)(b)(iii), 21(1)(3)(a)(viii), 21(6)

- At the time of the previous inspection, the single central register was not maintained effectively. This raised concerns about the school's staff recruitment processes and the impact this might have on the safety of pupils.
- Since then, the school business manager has been diligent in rechecking the information held for every member of staff and ensuring that the single central record is complete.
- In particular, leaders are ensuring that those who have lived outside of the United Kingdom are checked and verified in line with government guidance. Although this is ongoing, leaders are diligent in seeking the right information. They have been proactive in taking all practicable and reasonable steps to complete these checks.
- The suitability of the proprietor has been approved by the Secretary of State. All other relevant checks, for example those for the new chair of the governing board, are complete, including an enhanced criminal record check.
- The school business manager has undertaken checks of trustees to ensure that they are fit for the duty of governance, including any appointed before 1 May 2007. These checks have also been extended to staff. As a result, the school has ensured that all staff and trustees have had all relevant vetting checks.
- The standards in this part are now met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- The previous inspection raised several concerns about the condition and maintenance of the school's premises. These compromised pupils' safety and their welfare.
- Leaders have responded robustly to address the issues identified at that time.

- Leaders have ensured that any steep drops on emergency evacuation routes have steps so that pupils may exit unhindered. Other improvements include fixing restrictors to all upper floor windows. An emergency escape stairwell has been painted and stairs fitted with new treads. All defects identified at the previous inspection have been satisfactorily remedied.
- Leaders, including trustees, now have effective systems in place to maintain the school's accommodation and premises to an acceptable standard. They undertake routine premises checks to identify necessary works and take steps to remedy these. For example, leaders have decommissioned some areas of the school which they feel are unsafe, such as the former forge, which has been fenced off, and the outside cookery area.
- Leaders are taking further actions to avoid unnecessary risks for pupils. For example, they recognised that the grounds may benefit from further external lighting. While the existing lighting complies with the independent school standards (ISS), leaders are seeking to increase the number of lights.
- Since the previous monitoring inspection, leaders have commissioned cleaners to maintain the school site to an acceptable standard. This has ensured that the interior of the building is clean and orderly.
- The standard in this paragraph is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a)-(b)

- Since the previous inspection in November 2019, leaders have completed a full restructure of roles within the school. This took effect from September 2020.
- Although leaders and trustees are enthusiastic about their new ways of working, there is more to do to improve leadership. Leaders' strategic planning is weak. Leaders have not yet completed their own evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, there is no agreed school development plan in place yet.
- Leaders are introducing new expectations to improve teachers' assessment and performance, and pupils' progress. However, these actions are very recent and have not yet had time to embed, or impact well enough.
- Leaders have not allocated key responsibilities clearly enough. There is some ambiguity about leadership roles and responsibilities. For example, trustees are unsure about who is taking the lead for vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or children looked after. As a result, trustees are not entirely sure of who is taking responsibility, and for what.
- Altogether, these are barriers which currently hinder the effectiveness of leaders, and their capacity to improve some key aspects of the school.
- The standards in this part remain unmet.

Paragraph 34(1)(c)

- Previously this standard was unmet as there were too many weaknesses in the school's provision and arrangements to promote pupils' welfare. However, leaders and trustees

took these shortcomings seriously. They have revised their policies and practices to help keep pupils safe.

- Leaders have addressed previous weaknesses in other parts of the ISS to improve the culture of safety and well-being for pupils. The school now meets the requirements set out in Parts 3, 4 and 5 of the standards.
- The standard in this paragraph is now met.
- Overall, the standards in this part are not met.

Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

- At the time of the previous standard and progress monitoring inspections, weaknesses identified in the recruitment and vetting of staff caused concerns about the possible risk of harm to children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS standard 3.9).
- Since then, leaders' comprehensive checks of all staff and trustees working in the school mean that there is now confidence in the suitability of adults working with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Leaders' improved knowledge, together with the enhanced checks for the SCR, have contributed well so that this requirement 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, as set out in the annex of this report. 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 now meets the following independent school standards

- 7. The standards in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
 - (a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - (b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 11. The standard in this paragraph is met if 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.
- 12. The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 16. The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
 - (a) 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
 - (b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 18.(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if –
 - (e) in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person's suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
 - (3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
- 20.(6) The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if –
 - (b) subject to sub-paragraphs (7) and (8), the chair of the school makes the following checks relating to MB –
 - (iii) where, by reasons of MB's living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining an enhanced criminal record certificate is not sufficient to establish MB's suitability to work in a school, such further checks as the Chair of the school considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and,

where an enhanced criminal record check is made, the Chair obtains an enhanced criminal record certificate relating to the individual.

- 21.(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is –
 - (a) in relation to each member of staff (“S”) appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether –
 - (viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e), including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained.
- 25. The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 34.(1) 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 –
 - (c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	113603
DfE registration number	878/6029
Inspection number	10149447

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 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Rudolph Steiner School (South Devon) Limited
Chair	Rob Worthington
Headteacher	Jeff van Zyl
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,160 to £8,400
Telephone number	01803 897377
Website	www.southdevonsteinerschool.org
Email address	enquiries@steiner-south-devon.org
Date of previous standard inspection	2–4 April 2019

Information about this school

- South Devon Steiner School was founded by a group of parents in 1980.
- The school aims to provide a Steiner Waldorf education, promoting the fundamental principle of protecting the right to childhood and creative abilities for life.

- The school is based in a former manor house and other buildings on the same site approximately three miles northwest of Totnes, Devon.
- The Department for Education has agreed several modifications to the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school is exempt from completing the EYFS profile at the end of the academic year in which the child reaches the age of five.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school had its last standard inspection in April 2019 and was judged inadequate.
- Since the last progress monitoring inspection, the proprietor has deregistered and ceased to offer boarding provision.
- The chair of governors is new to the role. He took on these duties earlier in the week of this inspection.

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 did not commission Ofsted to evaluate the school's progress in meeting previously unmet standards in Part 1 of the independent school standards: Quality of Education. This is owing to the disruption COVID-19 (coronavirus) has had on schools since March 2020.
- This was the second progress monitoring inspection since the standard inspection in April 2019. The first progress monitoring inspection was completed in November 2019.
- Since the previous progress monitoring inspection and at the registration authority's request, the proprietor produced a second action plan. This was evaluated by Ofsted in February 2020. The registration authority rejected the school's action plan.
- This inspection was carried out in accordance with the 'Handbook for additional inspections of independent schools', and our published operational note. Therefore, the school had approximately 30 minutes' advanced notification of the inspection.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, school business manager, designated safeguarding lead and the SENCO. The inspector did not visit lessons or speak with class teachers or pupils. The inspector met with two trustees, including the newly appointed chair. The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including policies, safety checks, risk assessments, external audits and other records maintained by school staff. The inspector toured the site with leaders to evaluate how well leaders and managers are ensuring that the health and safety standards are maintained.
- The change to the school's boarding registration meant that there were revisions to the scope of this inspection, as seen in the registering authority's 'Inspection commissioning form'. Hence, this inspection did not consider any unmet standards that relate to boarding provision or the national minimum standards (NMS) for boarding.

Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) 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 –
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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