



Advice note for DfE following a material change inspection

School name	South Devon Steiner School
DfE registration number	878/6029
Inspection dates	7 June 2017
Lead inspector	Ted Cohn

Information about the inspection

This inspection was conducted by the School Inspection Service at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.¹ The inspection covered specific matters related to Parts 1,3,4,5,6,7 and Part 8 of the independent school standards (ISS).

Information about the school

- South Devon Steiner School was founded in 1980 by a group of parents to provide a broad and balanced education for their children in the Steiner Waldorf tradition. The school is non-selective and co-educational. Pupils come from families situated mainly in South Devon, including Exeter, but one pupil travels from Cornwall and several come considerable distances. The school is owned by Rudolf Steiner School South Devon Limited.
- The last inspection, in June 2015, judged the quality of education in the school as good, but leadership and management was in need of improvement. Since 2015 there have been significant changes in leadership and management, so trustees have a more active role in providing direction and long-term planning for the school, as well as closer oversight of the day-to-day management and administration of the school. The administration is also more efficient in ensuring the effective day to day management of the school and in supporting longer term plans for the school. A good example of this is the purposeful and effective manner in which they have approached the development of new provision for 15 to 19 year olds at the school, who will be studying the Steiner Secondary Certificate (SSC). The school now has a purpose-built, fit for purpose, building for its this provision.
- The school has requested permission to make a material change by increasing the age range of its pupils from 3 to 16 years old (currently) to 3 to 19 years old, so that it can have sixth form provision

Purpose of the inspection

- The primary purpose of the inspection was to assess whether the material change requested by the school was suitable and likely to lead to the independent school standards continuing to be met.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/contents.

Compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014²

Part 1: Quality of Education

- The Trust running the school has requested permission to extend its pupil age range from 3 to 16 years old to 3 to 19 years old in order to teach the Steiner Secondary Certificate (SSC) at all three levels, with level 3 representing Higher Education matriculation requirements. This is a relatively new qualification in the United Kingdom and Europe, but has been taught for a number of years in New Zealand Steiner schools under the aegis of the New Zealand Education Trust (NZET), which is the examination group that runs these courses, and is accredited by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The certificate has three levels, 1,2 and 3 and three grades, achievement, achievement with merit and achievement with excellence. The level 1 at merit or excellence grades are roughly equivalent to GCSE grade B/C and level 3 grades are recognised in New Zealand and, through the Lisbon Convention internationally, as Higher Education matriculation qualifications. Students completing the SSC level 3 course with excellence grades in their specialist areas and merits in most other subjects, have been accepted at universities in the United Kingdom through the UCAS system, with students gaining acceptance into their first university choices when applying from the Steiner schools in the UK that have been teaching this course up to level 3 already.
- Students are required to study compulsory modules in English, the humanities, sciences, mathematics and the arts in Year 12 for level 2 and in the arts, humanities and sciences at level 3, where they are also required to carry out a major research project of their own choice. In the breadth of learning that is required, the course has some similarities to the International Baccalaureate. The level 1 course taken by Year 11 pupils is roughly equivalent to GCSE in standard and a similar range of subjects are studied.
- The school has developed clear and helpful schemes of work that set out what is to be taught, learnt and assessed, drawing on detailed SSC material for its level 2 and level 3 courses, as they have for the level 1 course that they already teach. Unusually for English examination courses, the NZET inspects and needs to approve curricular plans for its level 3 courses before they can be taught.
- All students' work is internally moderated in the school and between a third and half of it is externally moderated by the examining board at levels 1 and 2. At level 3, all work is externally moderated.
- The students' work seen at level 1 was of a good to excellent quality and had been marked rigorously. No teaching was observed because Year 11 pupils were taking GCSE examinations and Year 10 pupils were preparing for their annual cycling tour of Brittany.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/contents/made.

- Most of the teachers of the new courses are already in the school, but a few have also been recruited specifically to teach the new courses. Staff have the qualifications and experience to take on their new responsibilities effectively and have been recruited and vetted appropriately for their suitability to work with young people.
- From 2017 the school is dropping the current requirement that students taking the level 1 SSC also take English, mathematics and a foreign language at GCSE. It has been decided that the differences in philosophical approach and assessment requirements compromise the potential breadth of the students' studies and create unnecessary stress. Parents have been informed about this decision.

Part 3: Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- The school has all the relevant policies related to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, such as Prevent and e-safety policies, in place. They are clear, well written, follow closely the regulations and provide helpful guidance to staff and parents. Related policies, for example anti-bullying and behaviour policies, are clear and sharply focused on regulatory requirements and guidance, so that the policies make a coherent and comprehensive contribution to ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. E-safety procedures include a continuing dialogue with pupils and parents. Risk assessments are thorough and appropriate, including those for the specialist facilities that will be used by sixth formers and the new sixth form building.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and her three deputies are fully trained at the appropriate level; all having taken DSL training courses within the last two years, and those who trained in 2016 are undertaking further specialist courses in aspects of safeguarding this year. The DSL is part of the senior management team and, together with other members of the safeguarding group, works closely with the designated trustee with responsibility for safeguarding, who has completed DSL level training. The school has appropriate systems for handling any concerns and ensuring that child protection records are obtained from other schools, where appropriate and passed on when necessary. Confidential files are stored safely.
- The school's anti-bullying and behaviour policies meet the regulations fully and there are appropriate arrangements in place for any sanctions, which reflect the seriousness of the offence.
- Policies related to fire safety are detailed, as are risk assessments for activities within the school and for the many trips or visits that pupils make. The trustees monitor risk assessments closely, particularly those related to visits, and in two cases this year extra detail has been required to fully satisfy the trustees. This is an extension of practice since the last inspection.
- Staff have an office in the new upper school building and projections are that students will be well supervised at all times, including all private study sessions.
- The school has effective policies for recording admissions and attendance, which are implemented effectively.

Part 4: Suitability of proprietor and staff

- All the necessary checks to safeguard pupils and ensure that suitable teaching and other staff are recruited have been carried out and the single central register is in good order. Two members of the senior management team are safer recruitment trained and are involved in recruiting staff. A nominated trustee, with suitable safer recruitment training, is involved in monitoring the procedures and process.

Part 5: Premises of and accommodation at schools

- The school has provided a purpose-built greenwood timber-frame and straw-bale insulated building for the new upper school delivering Steiner Waldorf education to SSC levels 1, 2 and 3 groups. It has plenty of space for students, is built to high sustainable standards, is light and airy and is a pleasant place to work. It contains suitable spaces for study and socialising, as well as teaching rooms and what will be a well-equipped learning centre. It also has appropriate changing rooms and showers for students. The builders have only recently handed over the building, but all the necessary equipment has been ordered and everything is likely to be in place by the start of the new term.
- The school's fire safety specialists and the Local Authority's fire officer have been consulted throughout the building process and the building is in the last stages of being granted a fire certificate.
- The school has the appropriate specialist facilities for the teaching of the courses in art and design, drama, music, technology and science following the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and assessed via the SSC at levels 1, 2 and 3.

Part 6: Information to parents and carers

- Parents have been kept well informed about the planned curriculum changes and extension to provide for sixth formers and are generally supportive of them.

Part 7: Handling complaints

- The school meets the requirements of the ISS.

Part 8: Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- Trustees, management and staff are strongly committed to the introduction of the SSC at levels 2 and 3, responding to pressure from parents to offer a Steiner Education for their children up to the ages of 18 or 19 years old.
- The school has had a long involvement in the development of the European Waldorf Diploma before adopting the New Zealand SSC. Trustees and managers have looked carefully at the SSC and have been teaching the level 1 course successfully for four years. They have a good understanding of the differences between the three different levels of assessment in the level 1 course: achieve, with merit and with excellence, which is very clearly reflected in their assessment.

This also includes pertinent comments to help students make progress in their learning. The level one work seen was of a standard that compares favourably with GCSE and some of the best work was already at good A-level standard.

- The school has effective internal moderation procedures and the examination board has unusually thorough external moderation procedures, rising from moderating about a third of coursework for level 1, to moderating all course work at level 3.
- Preparations for the new courses have been thorough and well organised. Managers, staff and trustees have had discussions with representatives of the examination board; have been in close contact with the Steiner schools which have already introduced the certificate at levels 2 and 3, including detailed talks about their experience; and have held discussions with parents, in preparation for their introduction. Parents, staff and students have also been made aware of the success of students completing the level 3 courses in achieving places at universities, often gaining their first choices.
- At the same time, the school has continued with its policy of ensuring that students and parents are aware of the full range of other opportunities for post-16 education available to students, as part of their careers education and guidance programme.
- The new accommodation for the sixth form has been financed through a bank loan and the school has already recruited enough students for Year 12 to be above the minimum number required to break even financially.
- Trustees and managers have ensured that the school has good quality policies to ensure the safeguarding, health and well-being of its students, and that they are implemented effectively.
- The school has secure educational, organisational and financial plans to support the proposed extension to the age range and number of students.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school meets these requirements.

Advice to the registration authority for independent schools

Overall outcome	The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented without modifications or conditions.
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Recommended number of pupils	288, including an extra 40 for the new levels 2 and 3 of the SSC
Recommended age range	3-19 years old
Recommended gender of pupils	mixed
Recommended type of special educational needs	N/A

