

# SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

*Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, and those schools belonging to the Cognita Group which are not members of the Independent Schools Council and its constituent associations*

## INSPECTION REPORT

INSPECTION CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO  
SECTION 109(1) AND (2) OF  
THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS ACT 2008

<b>Name of school:</b>	South Devon Steiner School
<b>DfE number:</b>	878/6029
<b>Inspection team:</b>	<b>Reporting Inspector:</b> Dr Martin Bradley  <b>Supporting Inspectors:</b> Mrs Eileen McAndrew Mr Paul Armitage  <b>Lay Inspector:</b> Mrs Helen Weatherhead
<b>Dates of inspection:</b>	23 - 25 June 2015

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## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	South Devon Steiner School
Address of school:	Hood Manor, Dartington, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 6AB
Telephone number:	01803 897377
Fax number:	01803 762374
Email address:	<a href="mailto:enquiries@steiner-south-devon.org">enquiries@steiner-south-devon.org</a>
Proprietor:	Rudolf Steiner School South Devon Ltd.
Chair of the College of Staff:	In rotation between Cathy Day, Elizabeth Elsholtz and Kevin Jones
Chair of the Trustees:	Marcus Link
Administrator:	Kevin Jones
DfE number:	878/6029
Type of school:	Independent school associated with the Steiner Fellowship
Age range of pupils and students:	3 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Male and female
Total number on roll:	Boys: 99      Girls: 159 (Full-time) (Part-time)      Boys: 0      Girls: 0
Number of children under 5:	Boys: 14      Girls: 14
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	Boys: 0      Girls: 1
Annual Financial Contributions:	Requested contributions in the range of £3360 to £6390
Type of inspection:	Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008
Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector:	Dr Martin Bradley
Supporting Inspectors:	Mrs Eileen McAndrew Mr Paul Armitage
Lay Inspector:	Mrs Helen Weatherhead
Dates of inspection:	23- 25 June 2015

## SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

### Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in accordance with Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by SIS and the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF) and agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). It was conducted by independent professional inspectors, who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations. The professional inspectors were accompanied by a trained lay inspector, who looked at agreed aspects of the school's organisation and maintenance of ethos and reported on these to SWSF. The lay inspector's findings are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection process.

### Information about the school:

South Devon Steiner School was founded by a group of parents in 1980. The school has a current roll of 286 boys and girls aged between three and sixteen years. In addition, it has parent and baby groups and after school care. This provision was not inspected at this time, nor was a summer school for overseas students who wish to improve their English. Other overseas students are at the school for short periods of up to a term or for a whole year. These students stay with local families, an arrangement which was not inspected, although the checks made by the school on the suitability of the host families were examined. The school was last inspected in 2010.

The school's basic principles are stated in its ethos as being an expression of three 'golden aims' suggested by Steiner:

- 'to receive the child in gratitude to the world they come from;
- to educate the child with love;
- and to lead the child into the true freedom which belongs to mankind.'

In seeking to meet these rules, the school follows the Steiner curriculum and to impart values 'such as confidence, self-motivation, creativity, an appetite for learning, an ability to work with others, practical skills, tolerance towards others and the ability to adapt and meet change enthusiastically'.

The school follows the Steiner Waldorf system for naming classes. The corresponding National Curriculum names for the classes in the school at the time of the inspection are:

Steiner class names	National Curriculum	
Kindergarten	Nursery, Year R, Year 1	
Class 1	Year 2	Lower school
Class 2	Year 3	Do
Class 3	Year 4	Do
Class 4	Year 5	Do
Class 5	Year 6	Do

Class 6	Year 7	Do
Class 7	Year 8	Do
Class 8	Year 9	Do
Class 9	Year 10	Upper School
Class 10	Year 11	Do

### **Summary of main findings:**

The overall quality of education is good. The school generally meets its aims. Particularly good use is made of its environment, and the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of the pupils. They make good progress in their learning. Teaching is good overall although it ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. Behaviour is generally good, but at times some poor behaviour from a minority of pupils reflects their limited engagement with activities and lessons. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural education is good, although pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different cultures in modern Britain is relatively under-developed. Assessment has been developed since the last inspection, however the use of different grading systems for different subjects potentially creates confusions and uncertainty as to how well pupils are doing and how they might improve. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory after a period of considerable change and reorganisation. The provision in the kindergarten classes is outstanding.

### **What the school does well:**

- spiritual development is outstanding;
- provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is outstanding and has developed well since the last inspection; and
- the outdoor environment is excellent and extends the pupils' learning and social development particularly well.

### **What the school must do to comply with the regulations:**

- provide suitable changing accommodation and showers for pupils aged 11 years or over (Paragraph 23(c)).

### **What the school must do to comply with the mandatory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage:**

- the school meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

### **What the school must do to comply with the Equality Act 2010:**

- the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

### **Next Steps:**

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following:

- embedding the new management structure and ensuring all parents are made aware of it;
- improving the overall quality of the teaching and assessment, and the way in which staff deal with instances of poor behaviour ;
- extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity in modern Britain and
- Improving the programme of personal, social, health and economic education to inform pupils about radicalism and related issues.

## **SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

### **PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school**

#### **The quality of the curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is good. It ensures that all pupils learn and make progress. It reflects all the principal characteristics of Steiner education including its openness to all pupils irrespective of ability, ethnicity, or religion. It recognises pupils' academic, emotional and spiritual needs and above all engenders in pupils a love of learning principally by helping them to be inquisitive and posing their own questions about the world around them. Evidence of this approach to the curriculum can be seen by taking a short walk in the grounds where there are facilities for wood work, metal work, a blacksmith's forge, a lime kiln, pottery facilities a charcoal burner, a plot used for the bonfire for the midsummer St John's Festival, a playing field and a most magnificent horticultural area with cultivated fruit, vegetables and flowers where pupils learn to tend the land. There is further evidence of the links to nature through the use of branches to make simple buildings and other constructions. Younger pupils were seen working with clay and straw to make cob with which they built a 'bug hotel' to help insects thrive throughout the year.

The curriculum is based on written schemes of work which take account of age, ability and pupils' aptitudes in the school. The curriculum follows the rhythm of the day, the week and the year. Main lessons provide a structured series of themes which significantly extend both the core work in English and mathematics and develop other work in subjects and areas of learning following a theme for approximately two hours each day for periods of up to four weeks. The focus on enquiry in the curriculum encourages pupils to think for themselves and ensures differences of approach and opinion and respect for the views of others. In doing so it supports fundamental British values. The content of the curriculum covers all the required areas of learning including speaking and listening in class and in more formal debate. Strong emphasis is also given to the development of skills in science, numeracy and literacy. Evidence of pupils' good literacy and other skills was seen in pupils' stage performances such as 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' and the 'Teahouse of the August Moon'. Science is often taught innovatively; for example, younger pupils making a battery using lemon juice, and in woodwork, greenwood turning for furniture making. There are opportunities to study modern languages, physical education (which is non-competitive for younger pupils), art, music and eurythmy. Eurythmy is structured movement to music and the spoken word.

In the Lower School, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) is delivered formally in timetabled sessions but in the Upper School, it is most frequently taught in a flexible way with the content matched to the needs and interests of the pupils. The main areas of content in PSHEE are dealt with across the curriculum including, for example, the content of debates on abortion, smoking and recent concerns about child abuse in the entertainment industry. There are

visits from outside speakers to cover, for instance, sex and relationship education in the Upper School which students said were useful. Although the school's programme teaches pupils to value diversity, some older students interviewed commented that within PSHEE, there had been comparatively little on homosexuality and little on family issues including divorce. Students were well aware of the dangers of drug abuse. They were aware of the issues linked to Facebook and Instagram but had not fully considered the potential misuse of emails, mobile telephones and YouTube. There is little in the curriculum to inform pupils about radicalism and related issues.

There is a suitable careers programme which focuses on long-term career choices and helps pupils to decide on the next stage of their education in apprenticeships and local colleges. Economic issues such as saving and debt are covered in the PSHEE course.

Older pupils go on to study for the GCSEs in English, mathematics, French and German. If a pupil wishes to study a GCSE science subject, they may do so at an after-school science club linked to a local college.

A recent innovation has been the introduction of the Steiner School Certificate (SSC). The school ran it as a pilot last year and it is now formally being offered alongside GCSE. Pupils complete projects involving a wide range of subjects and themes and which are awarded points. In English, one example is a project on moving and static images. The pupils study Shakespeare comparing the same scene in two films directed by different directors, analysing the different approaches. In ecology, pupils look at sand and the impact of man and the weather on plants and organisms in different physical zones. In mathematics, pupils study surveying. They are given equipment and have to discover themselves how to survey heights and levels in a field. Assessment is by a 'dialogic learning journal' in which conversations between a pupil and teacher are recorded. Overall, the Certificate looks a very promising vehicle for study. In these early days, the school is monitoring its progress carefully. The school is also following the European Portfolio Certificate which provides pupils with experience of writing projects supporting the work for the SSC.

There is a substantial programme of visits, many of which are abroad. In the UK visits are made to local and more distant UK locations such as Sidmouth and the Globe theatre and the school takes its plays to other schools in the UK and Europe. The school contributes to a local community development plan. All this helps support pupils' understanding of British society.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching is good overall. Whilst in the majority of lessons seen it was good or outstanding, in some it was satisfactory. None was inadequate. The pupils make good progress and develop a good range of skills and knowledge. They have often worked with their teachers for a number of years and the teachers use this experience to good effect to extend the pupils' learning. Drama was a significant feature of the work for many classes during the inspection and the pupils showed great skills and confidence in performance including high quality singing. Such ensemble work promotes their social skills and these are evident in many other areas of work.

Behaviour in classes and around the school is generally good. Where lessons involve the use of tools and other equipment, the pupils behave sensibly and show good awareness of potential risks. A significant minority of responses to the parental questionnaire commented on disruptive behaviour and the ways in which teachers dealt with this. During the inspection a small minority of pupils showed such behaviour and were dealt with effectively. The poor and disruptive behaviour by one or two pupils slowed the pace of the lesson and adversely affected the learning of the whole class. Teachers have agreed strategies for dealing with this poor behaviour, mainly using these to good effect. Overall, teaching strategies are generally good, and the best lessons for all age groups require active learning and investigation as well as challenging discussions. Elsewhere, especially when exercises focus on pupils copying work into their books, the work becomes more mundane and less demanding. The school has a number of support staff and therapists who are able to work pupils with identified needs and who follow the Steiner approach.

The school has worked effectively to maintain its levels of resourcing in classes and more generally. These are used appropriately by the pupils and include specialist equipment for outdoor lessons such as woodwork, horticulture, games and metalwork.

Assessment has been developed and the Steiner School Certificate has a rigorous system for this. In school, assessment mainly occurs during lessons when teachers provide verbal feedback to individual pupils. Much of this is not subsequently recorded and whilst teachers know the children very well and are able to plan subsequent work to meet their needs, there is limited written evidence to show pupils how well they are doing and how they might improve their work. In the older classes in the Lower School, a range of assessments are used, including alphabetical grades and 'achieved', merit' and 'distinction'. These potentially lead to confusions whereby 'D' can mean distinction in one subject and the lowest grade in another. Child studies are used effectively as a means of extending the teachers' understanding of individual pupils and to consider ways in which the teachers can best support their learning and development. Support for pupils with identified learning needs is good. Assessments are clear and appropriate. For the oldest pupils this includes working with an external specialist to consider any examination access needs for GCSE. For the oldest pupils on-going assessments are part of the Steiner School Certificate and the European Portfolio Certificate. These are particularly useful as a means of indicating pupils' progress and how they might improve their work. The relatively small size of each year group and the limited number of GCSE subjects taken make year on year comparisons inappropriate.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**PART 2 - The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The pupils' spiritual development is outstanding and their moral, social and cultural development is good. The provision is supported by the school's Christian roots and by the Steiner philosophy which permeates all aspects of the school's life. The ethos of the school successfully fosters a strong sense of self-worth alongside understanding and sensitivity for the natural world and humankind. Pupils are



familiar with the notion of the soul or spirit and recognise dimensions of the self beyond the material. Aesthetic development is strongly supported by excellent work in music, art, drama and horticulture where pupils' knowledge, skills and appreciation are of a high quality. From discussions with inspectors it was clear that pupils feel valued as individuals within the school community. The support pupils receive from staff and their peers contributes strongly to their self-awareness and their sensitive to the feelings of others.

The moral development of pupils is good. In the main lessons, pupils' attention, participation and sense of being part of a community is developed and fostered through recitation, singing, rhythmic movement and moments of reflection. Narratives from myth and literature in main lessons expand pupils' understanding of human behaviour and help them to reflect on the consequences of virtuous and other actions. Similarly in Religion lessons pupils explore examples of moral uprightness, respect for others, reverence, tolerance and social awareness. In this climate, British values are promoted and absorbed. Pupils become familiar with Bible stories, the lives of the saints, and famous men and women whose lives and work are an inspiration to humankind. Pupils develop a strong sense of what is right and wrong supported by the ethos of the school and the explicit values it espouses. From this strong moral basis, pupils learn a respect for democratic values and the rule of law along with notions of citizenship and political authority, extended and enriched by work on Greek and Roman history.

Pupils' social development is good. Building on the skills they acquired in the Kindergarten, pupils have an increasing capacity to work cooperatively in pairs or groups and to work collaboratively as in Class 2 where the whole class worked exemplarily to create a banner for St John's festival. In lessons they display respect for one another listening attentively and responding swiftly to one another, contributing to each other's learning. Behaviour is generally good; pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. Where there is occasional unsettled behaviour teachers manage it effectively. Pupils' high level of social awareness, tolerance and care of one another is fostered by the years they spend together developing relationships within the group. The involvement of parents alongside teachers in organising trips and supporting the school through fund raising events gives pupils a model of community cooperation and shared enterprise. The curriculum provides opportunities to extend pupils' social development through a community dimension, as for example through working with the Rural Skills Trust to learn something of the specific skills of hedging and building walls. The curriculum provides a range of themes and subjects which enable pupils, particularly older ones to develop a good knowledge of public institutions and services.

In the spirit of the Steiner Waldorf tradition, the school encourages appreciation of, and respect for, different cultural traditions, together with a spirit of acceptance and harmony in classrooms. There are many foreign pupils in the upper school who bring their cultural traditions, beliefs and values to enrich the community. Pupils study the major world faiths, their beliefs and festivals and some of the older pupils were able to identify cultural groups in British society whose faiths they had studied. Nonetheless, this aspect of cultural development is underdeveloped. Some opportunities are taken to celebrate festivals of other cultures if a child in the class shares that heritage, but more could be created. In Religion lessons for example, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different cultures in modern Britain is relatively under-developed. The curriculum helps to ensure pupils' have a growing understanding of the achievements of ancient cultures and their legacy to the wider

world. Work in the curriculum extends and enriches pupils' achievements in aspects of aesthetic and cultural development. For example the Class 4 play performed for pupils during the inspection, showed high quality achievement in singing, choral speaking and music. Work in art gives pupils good opportunities to use their growing knowledge and skills to explore working in different media, styles and techniques. Pupils across the school share their achievements in performances with their peers, parents, pupils from local schools and in the case of the older pupils, with audiences in Europe.

The school is mindful to ensure that no partisan political views are promoted in any of its activities in or outside the school. Visitors with specific political or religious views are not invited to visit to the school. The rationale behind the decision is that *'.....our teaching aims to leave them (pupils) free of doctrine, offering them impartial knowledge and understanding of many different cultures and beliefs.'*

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school has an appropriate range of policies to guide its care of pupils. The safeguarding policy sets out clear procedures which have been used to good effect. The behaviour policy works well, and there have been very few instances of serious misbehaviour. These are properly recorded together with actions taken. There is an effective anti-bullying policy. Older pupils interviewed were adamant that there is no bullying in what they regard as a harmonious community. They were aware of cyber-bullying and had reasonable knowledge of the lengths to which this can go. Issues that generate tension between pupils are successfully resolved by staff.

There is a health and safety policy, the content of which meets requirements but lacks specific details of health and safety issues, their monitoring schedule and who has responsibility for this. The school complies with requirements to prevent and deal with fire. Arrangements for the administration of first aid meet requirements. Arrangements for the supervision of pupils are satisfactory. There are a good number of well-written risk assessments covering most aspects of this complex site. The risk assessments for the many visits made by pupils are very thorough.

Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding and when interviewed, gave clear, accurate descriptions of generally good safeguarding procedures within the school. Not all are clear enough about the processes involved once the school had contacted outside agencies. Older pupils interviewed had a satisfactory understanding of safeguarding issues, including forms of abuse. Although they said they were more likely to deal with issues themselves by discussing problems with the peer involved and other friends rather than by involving staff, they understood school procedures and acknowledged that there was a range of adults to whom they could turn with their concerns.

The school has five nominated safeguarding officers. They are suitably trained and fulfil their duties appropriately. The child protection files are securely stored. The

files are in satisfactory order though in a few instances, 'the story' was not easy to follow.

The admission and attendance registers are maintained systematically.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**PART 4 - Suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors. The school makes all the required pre-appointment checks to ensure that staff are fit and proper and that pupils are appropriately safeguarded. The school is in the process of merging the separate single central registers (SCRs) for the staff and volunteers and for families used to provide care for overseas students.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The school makes good use of its premises and grounds to meet the needs of the pupils and their education. It works hard to maintain the assortment of buildings and the use of the nearly seven acres of grounds is extremely effective. Their development and careful tending add considerably to the pupils' experiences and make a major contribution to the delivery of the Steiner curriculum. The pupils indicate that they appreciate the opportunities provided by their environment and the use made of it to extend their learning.

The main school building is listed and includes classrooms and administrative offices. Other buildings include specialist provision for art, eurythmy, science, woodwork and other crafts. The development of the 'bunkhouse' currently in progress is intended to add to the school's facilities as a conference, school journey and training centre. At present the school does not have changing and shower facilities for pupils aged over eleven, although these are available at the sports centre which the school uses for most but not all lessons in physical education. It intends to provide showers, but as yet there are no clear plans.

The extensive grounds provide well-organised areas for games and play as well as for horticulture and aspects of farming. A wide range of vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers are grown bio-dynamically. The pupils are encouraged to build kilns and other structures, making their own bricks and deciding the most appropriate mixes of materials for these and for surfacing the structures externally and internally, thereby considering scientific aspects of the operation.

The outside activities potentially pose problems for maintaining the buildings' internal cleanliness as staff and pupils move indoors from the garden plots and other areas. Staff, pupils and others, including parents, share the commitment to cleaning the

buildings and are able to maintain basic standards to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pupils, although some areas are less well maintained than others. The school has recently clearly marked cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking. There are sufficient washrooms and toilets for the current numbers of pupils, although the location of some of these reflects historical factors and not the current most efficient use of the premises. The school is aware of this and intends to seek to address this as part of its development plan.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

No.

***What does the school need to do in order to comply with the regulations?***

Provide suitable changing accommodation and showers for pupils aged 11 years or over and who receive physical education (paragraph 23 (c)).

**PART 6 - The quality of information for parents**

The provision of information to parents is good. Prospective Parents' Afternoons (PPA) are held which are well attended and appreciated.

For parents already in the school, there are termly Parents' Evenings where children's progress is discussed, the curriculum is described, and information on current events is given. In some classes there is a dedicated time for parent meetings. Class contact parent representatives are an effective channel of communication. Parents can also have individual consultations on their child's progress. Parents throughout the school receive an annual report. The best of these note the child's individual progress and also give pointers for future development in the coming year.

Whole school meetings provide an opportunity for parents to have an overview of the school and how it is run. Information on all school policies and also a Parents' Handbook are on the school website. Owing to recent policy and administrative changes, some aspects of the website are out of date. It is in process of being updated. Communication at times has been problematic and in the interests of openness and transparency, Council Minutes are now posted on the website.

The newsletter, the Friday Flier, available in hard copy and via email, is lively, colourful and informative. It is not yet published on the school website.

One hundred parents returned parental questionnaires. The overwhelming majority were unequivocally supportive of the education their child receives. A significant minority of the respondents were critical of specific issues. These concerns centred around school leadership and management, behaviour management, lack of parental communication and financial concerns. The Council is aware of these issues.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **PART 7 - The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure**

The school's Complaints policy is comprehensive and compliant with the regulations. There were no formal complaints in the last twelve months.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **PART 8 - The quality and effectiveness of leadership in and management of schools**

The quality of leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. Over recent years and the last year in particular, much consideration has been given to devising a management structure to best serve the needs of the school. Nonetheless, the Trustees were not satisfied that the resulting new system was working effectively. As a result, they intervened recently to simplify and improve it, making it more fit for purpose. A significant minority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed concern in relation to three aspects of management: a lack of clarity in the structure of management; the resulting effects on the running of the school; and approaching the school with problems. Inspectors considered these comments and were of the view that the previous management structure was opaque and unlikely to be clearly understood by those not directly part of it. This would be likely to have adversely affected communication between home and school.

The existing structure has been refined very recently with the creation of a school management team (SMT). This newly created group has direct delegated responsibility from the Trustees for the day-to-day organisation and running of the school with representatives from the educational and administrative aspects of the school. The school management members understand their roles and responsibilities but their written job descriptions are not yet finalised. Staff with senior management responsibility are well qualified for their roles with the knowledge and skills to help ensure that regulations are met. Regular departmental meetings in all parts of the school help to ensure that pupils' learning experience is discussed and given an appropriate priority. The College, which consists of teachers and some administrative staff, and the Collegiate, which comprises all teaching staff, meet regularly and report on all aspects of their work. The management structure is new and the leadership is aware of the need to monitor its effectiveness to ensure that it brings about improvements to the consistency of educational experience for pupils and that the independent schools regulations are met consistently.

The small number of trustees has overall responsibility for the school and regard as their primary purpose to *'safeguard the school and ensure that it follows the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner for the benefit of the children'*. They are aware of their responsibility to promote the well-being of pupils and their commitment and endeavour is evident. The trustees bring a useful range of skills in areas such as human resources, pedagogy, finance and recruitment and employment. Some individuals have specific responsibility for areas such as safeguarding, child protection and recruitment. All policies and procedures are in place and effectively implemented to help ensure that pupils' welfare and safety is promoted and that their educational experience is developed and monitored to improve teaching and learning. In the longer term, the trustees are broadly guided by the school's

ambitious and detailed seven-year Strategic Plan which seeks '*to develop the school's educational life; to secure and manage resources and to foster a community experience.*' Progress is reviewed annually, strengths and weakness identified and objectives set for the following year. The current building of the new bunk house is an early realisation of part of the Strategic Plan.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **SECTION C: ORGANISATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL**

*This section is not a requirement of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The business organisation and maintenance of the school's ethos were inspected by the Lay Inspector, who has written this section of the report.*

### **The quality of the organisation and maintenance of the ethos of the school**

The Council of Trustees of South Devon Steiner School carries ultimate legal responsibility for the school. It ensures that the school complies with charity law and other relevant legislation and represents the members of the School Association and holds responsibility for governance of the school. The Council meets monthly and currently has six members. It receives administrative and pedagogical reports at each meeting.

The Council has been concerned for some time over the general efficiency of how the school has been run. An organisational review was undertaken and very recently the new structure was ratified.

Members of the College of Teachers and Administrative Staff group have undertaken to make a deeper commitment to the running of the school. Membership is by consensual agreement of current College members. They oversee the general wellbeing and ethos of the school and ensure that policies, goals and objectives are adhered to. The Chair of College is a member of the SMT. These are appropriate arrangements.

The SMT currently comprises three members of College: the Senior Administrator, the Education Administrator and a teacher. The group has delegated authority from the Council to make executive decisions. SMT first consults with the College and any other relevant bodies over projects and issues. Having then made decisions, it ensures they are actioned in a timely manner.

The Collegiate is comprised of all teachers in the school. It meets weekly. It discusses such matters as pedagogical issues, hears departmental reports, studies, and it prepares for Festivals. It may make recommendations to College for its consideration over matters, as they arise, that affect the life of the school.

In addition departmental teacher meetings take place. Their work involves sharing practice within their departments, conducting child studies and discussing current and future events in school. The new Steiner School Certificate (SSC) project is well underway. Working towards a Class 11 in 2016 is a task which has been occupying the Upper School teachers. Their research and work is bearing fruit.

A very efficient and effective group, the Teachers' Development Group (TDG) has also been set up. This group is highly organised. Some of its tasks are ensuring suitable induction and support for new staff. They also ask all teachers for regular self-evaluation forms to be completed. Out of the information gathered, they arrange further professional training, mentoring, sponsoring and peer appraisal. Everything is recorded and kept in staff files. They maintain an overview of quality assurance for the teachers. Teachers have embraced this system in a co-operative and collegial manner.

The Administration team provides vital and efficient support for the smooth-running operational management and the day to day running of the school.

The role of parents is central to maintaining the ethos and wellbeing of the school. Parents undertake to contribute not only financially but also in practical ways. This lends itself to a community feeling. The school has faced considerable challenges over the past year with a high turnover of administrative staff due to a number of unforeseen circumstances. These are acknowledged by Council. In an open letter, the Chair of Trustees wrote 'We have been for a while in need of a functioning organisation which allows for efficient flow of communication and effective and appropriate decision making.' He also acknowledges the huge resource among parents of goodwill, talents and skills which can create a 'social balance sheet'. Previous challenges are being addressed. With clearer communication and a new and simpler organisational structure, the school should continue to flourish and move forward. With the help of their dedicated teachers, happy children are thriving in this unique and beautiful site. They have opportunities not only for academic but experiential learning of a high quality and the children are testament to what the school provides.

***Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?***

Yes.

The Council of Trustees might consider:

- improving pathways for clear parental communication and involvement;
- stabilising and maintaining the new management and organisational structures; and
- ensuring these structures have time targets for regular reviews.



## **SECTION D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

### **The overall quality and standards of the Early Years' provision**

The kindergarten provision is outstanding. Since the last inspection, the staff have worked to ensure that the range of the children's needs are met even more fully. Challenging differentiated activities are provided for all ages, particularly supporting the older children's learning and skills as they prepare to move into Class 1 in September 2015. This planned differentiation ensures that all children's needs are met, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The children's personal and emotional development is outstanding: they feel safe and are secure and happy. This is reflected in their high levels of independent play, their concentration and their ability to communicate with the adults and with one another extremely well. The requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare are fully met and the overall leadership and management are particularly effective in evaluating their practice and ensuring that continuous improvement enhances the children's life chances.

### **How well the Early Years' provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend.**

The provision is outstandingly effective in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. They are very well supported by educational programmes which enable them to reach expected levels of development. They acquire extremely good skills and the capacity to learn effectively and are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning. The older children from all four kindergartens, due to move into Class 1 in September, have their own circle time and picnic each week. They experience slightly more challenging activities, well related to Class 1 work and are able to develop social contacts for the coming year. They also have some other activities, such as making dolls, which extend their manipulative skills ready for the Class 1 work. Through these activities and the well-matched planning for the younger children the practitioners demonstrate high expectation of the children and are able to enthuse, engage and motivate them very effectively. The staff work very well with parents and carers to help the children to settle and to share information and practices relating to the children's learning and development.

### **The contribution of the Early Years' provision to children's well-being.**

The contribution of the provision to the children's well being is excellent. They form appropriate bonds and secure attachments with their carers. The children are happy and greatly enjoy what they are doing. Through independent but well-planned and organised activities they become confident and purposeful learners who behave very well. Cooperative play is a major feature of the activities and the excellent outdoor provision with many areas of different sizes, well organised and planted with a variety of vegetables, herbs and flowers, supports their work extremely well. Their excellent language development is very evident in their discussions with the adults and one another, as where two older boys independently discussed the relative merits of water flavoured with fennel or mint. They are able to sustain their concentration for significantly long periods, often engaging with a group of children, but also persisting with tasks working on their own.

The very high quality home cooked food encourages the children's awareness of a healthy diet. They understand the importance of physical exercise and manage their own hygiene and personal needs very well. The children are extremely well prepared for their transitions within the kindergartens and into Class 1.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years' provision.**

The leadership and management of the kindergartens fulfil their responsibilities in meeting the learning and development needs of the educational programme extremely well. They have carefully analysed the EYFS and the Steiner Waldorf curriculum to provide for the full three to seven age range in the kindergartens. The safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS and other legislation are fully met and consistently implemented. Risk assessments are appropriate, although that for food preparation does not take full account of the Food Standards Agency guidelines on allergens. Both indoors and outside the environment is welcoming, safe, spacious and extremely stimulating. Systems for self evaluation are particularly good and inform the kindergartens' appropriate targets for improvement. Staff share their performance management and ensure that continuous professional development is good. Partnerships with parents and carers are strong. These ensure that the children receive the support they need.

#### ***Does the school meet the mandatory requirements?***

Yes

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. Further copies of the report are available from the School Inspection Service website: [www.schoolinspectionservice.co.uk](http://www.schoolinspectionservice.co.uk)