

Calder Valley Steiner School

The St John's Centre, Church Bank, Cragg Vale, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 5TF

Inspection dates

19–21 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The leadership team, including the board of trustees, has not ensured that all of the independent school standards have been met.
- Staff plan and teach a curriculum in line with Steiner principles. However, leaders have not ensured that schemes of work were available in all curriculum areas at the time of the inspection.
- The leaders have started to put in place an assessment system. However, currently it only covers English and mathematics. Assessment in other areas is not yet securely in place.
- The early years lead teacher has started to link observations of children's learning to the early years framework. However, this system is in an early stage of development.
- The outside area is too small for the number of pupils in school and has uneven and broken paving stones. The next-door church yard offers an extended play area, but at the time of the inspection the area was too wet to access after recent flooding.
- The quality of teaching and learning requires improvement because leaders have not made sure teachers always plan learning which meets the needs of pupils, particularly the most able. This does not help pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Staff do not always correct pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation. This slows their progress.
- The quality of the curriculum taught in science, history and PE is less strong than in other areas.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have ensured that pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Attendance is continuing to improve and pupils' behaviour is good overall.
- Trustees are playing an increasingly active role in improving the quality of teaching and learning in school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management to ensure that the independent school standards are met by:
 - improving the quality of the curriculum taught in science, physical education (PE) and history and by making sure curriculum planning reflects these changes accurately
 - further developing the system currently in place for assessing pupils' progress in English and mathematics and handwork to include other subject areas
 - developing further the system currently in place in early years, which links pupils' learning and development to early years assessment
 - increasing the amount of outdoor space and the quality of the surface available for pupils to play on at break and lunchtimes.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils by:
 - increasing the amount of curriculum time spent on improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - ensuring that learning set for the most able pupils accurately meets their needs and enables them to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and trustees have not ensured that all the independent school standards have been met.
- The outdoor space where pupils play at lunch and breaktime is too small for the number of pupils. The surface is made up of a mixture of paving slabs and stone gravestones. Some of these are broken, leading to an uneven surface and trip hazards in places. The extension to the play area is the cleared area of the graveyard in the next-door church yard. This area is grassed but at times becomes too boggy to play in, which significantly reduces the space available.
- The planned curriculum covers all the areas required by the independent school standards. However, opportunities to learn in some areas of the curriculum are more limited than others. For example, pupils themselves feel that they would like the opportunities to try different sports in PE. Plans are in place for a physics unit to be delivered in science, but so far pupils' access to investigating the properties of materials and learning about earth and space is more limited. Modern technology is not taught but more general technology is, but not to a great depth.
- Teachers have started to develop an assessment system which enables them to check on pupils' learning from their starting points. So far, the assessment system is in place for mathematics, English and handwork. Leaders and trustees are aware the system needs to be extended to other subject areas, but currently the school has not confirmed a timescale for this change.
- The proprietor has put in place regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations. Feedback provided is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Through visits to a range of different locations, for example the media museum and a Hindu temple in Bradford, pupils develop an understanding of British values. They also deepen their levels of social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding.
- School assemblies and personal, social and health education ensure that pupils have a strong understanding of the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010, as well as developing a good understanding of other aspects of fundamental British values.
- Currently, leaders and trustees do not have a vision for the future of the school as they are planning to close the school. The trustees of the charity are planning to oversee the delivery of part-time education for home-educated children, using the school as a base with current staff.

Governance

- Since the previous inspection, the school trustees have played a more active role in improving the school.
- For example, one trustee has previous experience of special educational needs and is now working closely with the special educational needs coordinator to bring about improvement to this aspect of the school's work.

- Trustees have a diverse skill set which enables them to hold leaders and teachers to account. For example, minutes of trustees' meetings show that pupils' books are now scrutinised and teachers' planning is looked at in detail. This once again is supporting school improvement overall.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school manager has a clear understanding of safeguarding requirements and has ensured that the school's safeguarding policy is clearly displayed on the school's website.
- Working closely with the safeguarding children's team from Calderdale local authority, the school manager has ensured that the safeguarding policy meets requirements and other safeguarding documentation, including policies and procedures, are written to a high standard.
- All the mandatory pre-employment checks have been carried out and the school's single central record of these checks meets legislative standards.
- Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding and are clear about what they need to do should a child have difficulties. They receive regular safeguarding updates from the local authority and the school manager. Regular quizzes are set to test staff levels of understanding and knowledge of current safeguarding concerns both in the area and beyond.
- Risk assessments are comprehensive and are carried out regularly. For example, the school manager has produced a safeguarding pack for all staff to complete before undertaking a school trip.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent overall.
- Time is not always used productively in lessons and pupils do not always understand what is expected of them as instructions are not always clear. This slows pupils' learning, particularly when tasks set also lack a wide enough selection of resources.
- The most able pupils often receive work which is planned at the same level as that for others in the class, particularly in literacy. A lack of opportunities to extend and deepen their learning reduces the progress they make overall.
- Pupils' errors in literacy are not always corrected well enough. As a result, pupils' spelling skills and use of punctuation do not always improve rapidly enough.
- Pupils form strong and appropriate relationships with staff. They are keen to learn and develop independence.
- Pupils often show mature attitudes in the classroom. They listen closely to each other's opinions and offer sensible and at times insightful advice on how to improve each other's work.
- Staff work closely together as a team and are knowledgeable about the personalities of each of the pupils in their care.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are aware of most of the forms that bullying takes. For example, they are clear about physical and emotional bullying but lack a clear understanding of cyber bullying. Most are aware of the dangers that the internet poses; however, they are not always given clear direction on how to keep themselves safe when away from school. This does not prepare them well for transferring to the next phase in their education.
- The school is situated close to a river, which pupils walk along on a regular basis; however, the curriculum offers few opportunities to learn about water safety.
- Pupils are keen to learn and those spoken to said they enjoyed coming to school and feel safe. They appreciate that they have an adult to turn to if they have concerns and feel the school worry box enables them to express their feelings anonymously if needed.
- Parents and carers say that the small numbers of pupils and nurturing environment enable their children's self-esteem and self-confidence to grow and blossom during their time in school.
- Older pupils have opportunities to learn how to take responsibilities, for example, in ensuring that the gate is closed during the school day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils are self-confident learners who care about the needs and feelings of others. Occasionally, the harmony in classrooms is disrupted by incidents of difficult behaviour; however, learning usually goes on unabated when this happens.
- Pupils overall are lively and interested in the world about them. Older pupils in particular behave well and show caring attitudes when supporting the needs of younger pupils.
- Pupils' attendance levels dipped last year. Leaders have worked hard and successfully to bring about improvement. Current levels of attendance are close to the national average for primary pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in developing skills in the correct use of punctuation and an ability to spell words correctly is slower than it should be. Work in pupils' books shows this clearly.
- The progress pupils make in literacy and numeracy is variable across different classes in the school. Standards in writing are lower in some classes than they should be.
- Progress in science, history and geography is slower than in other areas because pupils spend less time studying these subjects.

- Pupils' work shows progress over time in most subject areas, particularly in the creative curriculum. For example, in handwork pupils learn skills in how to work with a variety of different materials including wood and copper, producing both beautiful and useful articles.
- Pupils overall read well and often. Many develop a love of reading. Some younger pupils have limited skills and strategies at decoding (applying a knowledge of letter sounds) to unfamiliar words, which hampers their reading at times.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children join the kindergarten with a wide range of knowledge and skills. They settle into the calm atmosphere of the early years provision and start to learn and develop in line with the requirements of the Steiner curriculum.
- Younger children make stronger progress than older pupils who remain in the unit until they are six.
- Pupils' welfare standards are met overall; however, the outdoor play area for the early years is shared with the school. As a result, the play of children in the early years is affected by the uneven surface of the play area. They also lack opportunities when using this area to increase their physical development through, for example, pedalling bikes and climbing.
- The early years has been given an exemption from the learning and development aspect of the early years foundation stage areas for learning by the Department for Education. This means that the setting does not report on pupils' progress in this area.
- The early years lead teacher has started to develop an assessment system in which staff record their observations of children's learning. This system is recorded in each child's learning journey book which is shared with their parents. Analysis of learning journeys shows that staff are recording children's learning effectively and children are making progress overall.
- Children each have a key person who is responsible for their individual welfare. This system is well embedded and children are clear who their key worker is. This enables them to feel safe and secure at school.
- Much of the children's time at the school is spent outdoors on long walks in the nearby countryside. Children clearly enjoy these walks and use them to explore the natural landscape. They develop an understanding of the names of many plants and use their counting skills to work out, for example, the number of petals on a dandelion.
- While children are read to by staff from a wide range of books, their reading skills are less well developed than they should be. Formal phonics teaching is not carried out; however, early reading skills are developed through the singing of rhymes at ring time sessions.
- Children behave well and show kind and considerate attitudes to each other.

School details

Unique reference number	137503
DfE registration number	381/6002
Inspection number	10094068

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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Calder Valley Steiner School Ltd
Chair of trustees	Richard Bunzl
Chair of the council of teachers	Pippa Colebourne
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,200–£5,400
Telephone number	01442 882 071
Website	caldersteiner.org.uk
Email address	caldersteiner@gmail.com
Date of previous inspection	15–17 May 2017 inspection carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS)

Information about this school

- The school was previously inspected by SIS in May 2017 and was graded inadequate in a standard inspection for overall effectiveness and all other areas except the early years provision.
- Two monitoring visits were carried out by SIS in September 2017 and February 2018. Not all standards were found to be met during the first monitoring visit. All standards were found to be met at the time of the second monitoring visit.
- At the time of the inspection, the school trustees were applying to the Department for Education to close the school having gained registration on the voluntary Childcare

Register. They plan to develop the 'flexi-learning centre' currently offered to a small number of home-educated children. The school plans that the kindergarten will continue in its current role after these changes have been put in place.

- The school follows a curriculum based on the Waldorf Steiner approach to education.
- The school has exemption from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.
- The school does not use alternative providers for secondary-age pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team carried out a range of activities including an inspection of the school building to ascertain the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the school manager, members of the teachers' council, members of staff, the chair of the board of trustees and two other trustees, and two group of pupils.
- The inspectors carried out an analysis of all documents required for the school to meet the independent school standards. These included the school's curriculum policy, safeguarding documentation, health and safety documents and the school's complaints policy.
- The inspectors also took into account the feedback given by 26 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Debbie Redshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school
 - 3(g) 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.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 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.
- 29(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable outdoor space is provided.

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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