

# 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 162A  
OF THE EDUCATION ACT 2002**

<b>Name of school:</b>	Calder Valley Steiner
<b>DfE number:</b>	381/6002
<b>Inspection team:</b>	<b>Reporting Inspector:</b> Mr Simon Bennett  <b>Supporting Inspector:</b> Dr Martin Bradley  <b>Lay Inspector:</b> Miss Deborah Leah
<b>Dates of inspection:</b>	30 June to 2 July 2014

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## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Calder Valley Steiner		
Address of school:	The St John's Centre, Church Bank, Cragg Vale, Hebden Bridge HX7 5TF		
Telephone number:	01422 882071		
Email address:	info@caldersteiner.org.uk		
Proprietor:	Calder Valley Steiner Education Ltd		
Chair of the College of Teachers:	Mrs Ingrid Lihou		
Chair of the Trustees:	Dr Richard Bunzl		
Administrator:	Ms Kate Lunn		
DfE number:	381/6002		
Type of school:	Independent school associated with the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship		
Age range of pupils and students:	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils:	Male and female		
Total number on roll:	(Full-time)	Boys: 5	Girls: 7
	(Part-time)	Boys: 9	Girls: 6
Number of children under 5:		Boys: 13	Girls: 16
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:		Boys: 0	Girls: 0
Number of boarders:		Boys: 0	Girls: 0
Annual fees:	£3,600 to £4,300		
Type of inspection:	Section 162A of the Education Act 2002		
Inspection Team:			
	Reporting Inspector:	Mr Simon Bennett	
	Supporting Inspector:	Dr Martin Bradley	
	Lay Inspector:	Miss Deborah Leah	
Dates of inspection:	30 June to 2 July 2014		

## **SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

### **Purpose and scope of the inspection:**

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service in accordance with Section 162(A) (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by the Service and the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship 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 management and ethos and reported on these to the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. 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:**

Calder Valley Steiner School is an independent day school, which provides part-time and full-time education for 56 girls and boys aged from three to eleven years. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school was first registered in September 2011. Previously, there was provision for children aged from three to six years and this had been inspected as an Early Years setting by Ofsted in December 2010. The school is situated in a former church house adjacent to the church in Cragg Vale. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in two Kindergarten classes. Children in the Kindergarten range from three to six years in age. The school aims to provide an education based upon the philosophy and principles of Rudolf Steiner. *'By giving equal importance to the child's social and emotional life as well as their intellectual abilities the education develops the whole child. All subjects are taught in an artistic and creative way. The teacher will remain with the class throughout the whole school, forming a strong bond of trust, love and respect.'*

Calder Valley Steiner School seeks to enable children to find their own strengths, to provide them with the inner resources to overcome any educational challenges they face, and to develop in them faculties which will help them to live in the world as creative, free-thinking individuals. The mission statement for the school is "Making Time for Childhood".

The aim of Calder Valley Steiner School is to deliver fully accessible high quality education in a nurturing environment based on the Steiner-Waldorf curriculum and teaching principles. It is the aim of the teachers in Calder Valley Steiner School to foster this positive relationship to learning across all subjects. In the kindergarten this approach lays the foundation for subsequent formal education; in the school this, in turn, lays the foundation for a healthy relationship with the process of education, thereby laying the foundations for life-long learning.

The school has been granted exemption from some aspects of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Hence, these aspects were not inspected and no judgements were made.

The school is in the process of acquiring a further building and garden close by the existing premises.

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

Calder Valley Steiner School provides a good education for its pupils in the context of Steiner aims and ethos. The school has strengthened its provision since the previous inspection and has positively responded to the two recommendations made then. Firstly, opportunities, facilities and access for exercise and play have been increased. Secondly, the raising of pupils' cultural awareness of the local and wider community, and the world beyond the school, has been the focus of a detailed development plan. Its execution has been meticulously recorded and implemented. Pupils have benefited greatly from this extension of their opportunities. They have written letters of thanks to organisers, and their reactions and those of the teachers have been carefully logged. Consequently, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now excellent. Curriculum, teaching and assessment, and provision in EYFS are all good, as is the focus on the welfare, health and safety of pupils. The school has strong administrative procedures.

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

- the school benefits from a strong and supportive community which provides a stimulating environment for learning;
- parents are hugely appreciative of what the school offers;
- pupils are well behaved, self-confident and articulate; and
- the school is successful in encouraging a healthy lifestyle for its pupils.

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

The school complies with the regulations.

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

The school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

### **Next Steps:**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might consider the following points for development:

- to strengthen the administrative systems and procedures to build on what has already been achieved; and
- to develop further consistency in planning and assessments through the sharing of good practice.

## **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 and is firmly based on the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, supplemented by well-chosen themes related to local and regional circumstances. Pupils of compulsory school age have experience of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative work. Spanish is also taught. Much of the curriculum is provided through Main Lessons which provide approximately four-week blocks of study of a subject or theme for up to two hours each morning. Curriculum planning covers the Main Lessons, along with annual and four-weekly plans. These are supplemented by weekly planning and, where appropriate, detailed and specific lesson plans. Many of the themes follow the rhythm of the seasons, festivals and other significant events. In turn, this approach is reflected in the weekly and daily rhythms of activities. Planning varies in its detail, with Class 1 and Class 2 and 3 following a broadly similar approach which is more developed in the older class. The two kindergarten classes vary in the detail of their planning, but each is at least satisfactory.

Across the school, language skills are particularly well developed, especially speaking and listening. From the youngest class, pupils are encouraged to show consideration towards each other's comments and views. They are able to express themselves confidently, clearly and accurately, using complex sentences and a wide vocabulary. In the oldest class, in particular, a wide range of language skills are planned and assessed including grammar, spelling, reading and handwriting. Mathematics has a similarly wide good coverage of the full breadth of the subject, with numeracy skills being developed in a practical context. The breadth of planning illustrates the teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught.

Main Lesson themes have been extended recently such as the farming theme's development to include work on wool and sheep. A demonstration of sheep shearing was followed by one of the use of a spinning wheel and both were greatly enjoyed, leaving pupils eager to try their hand at spinning. The arrival of a pupil from Australia led to the study of Australian bushmen and other antipodean themes. The death of Nelson Mandela provided opportunities to consider his life and work. This was extended through the school's links with Steiner schools in South Africa and Nepal; pupils have penfriends in these schools as well as fundraising to help support them. There is a summer gardening club for the older pupils.

The curricular provision for personal, social and health education is particularly good. Pupils have a clear understanding from an early age of the need for healthy eating and of what constitutes a healthy diet. They also appreciate the need for exercise and put this into good effect. Since the last inspection the school has made good use of the adjacent church grounds and the local tennis club for physical activities.

Pupils below compulsory school age follow an appropriate programme related to their personal, social, emotional and physical development and their communication and language skills. Exemptions have been granted from aspects of the literacy, mathematics and technology requirements as part of the group exemption obtained

by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. These aspects were not inspected and no judgements were made.

The curriculum enables pupils to learn and to make good progress. This is evident both in their work books and in lessons. In one Class 1 lesson the pupils showed that they no longer needed the teacher's support in counting in multiples of two, five, ten and fifty. This represented clear progress since earlier in the term. Such progress is not just in academic learning but also in their social skills and potential experiences in later life. The Class 2/3 camping trip has provided many opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge in working out the cost per head for aspects of the trip, whilst the Tour de France, passing near the school, involves children in helping in the school's cafe and joining the Cragg Vale Community Association and the local primary school in the 'longest choir on the longest hill on the longest day of the year'.

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

Teaching of generally good quality enables pupils to make good progress. The pupils are given regular opportunities on a daily basis to learn both indoors and outside. Teachers use the school's space and surrounding area to full effect to enrich the learning experience. Teaching seen reflected the thorough knowledge staff have of their pupils and their individual needs, and this enables them to support pupils to good effect, ensuring that each lesson facilitates development of understanding and provides good opportunities for reflection. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual trust and respect, and links with parents are strong. The approach to teaching is largely whole-class with opportunities for extension work individually or in small groups. Understanding is strengthened through a well guided balance between exploration and repetition. Pupils enjoy lessons and participate to the full; lessons are particularly strong in oral work, listening skills and language development. Main Lessons are well planned and in lessons seen there was evident enjoyment and enthusiasm on the part of both pupils and staff. Pupils responded to storytelling with interest and enthusiasm. A lesson in Spanish gave evidence of a range of activities and rapid acquisition of language. Teachers exhibit clear understanding of Steiner principles and model a wide range of skills whether in use of language, numeracy, boardwork or painting to excellent effect.

Pupils make good progress; this is evident in their exercise books, photographs of their activities and in their drawings. Parents were unanimous in their questionnaires that their children make good progress and enjoy school, and this is corroborated by the detailed records of achievement and attainment kept by class teachers and the reporting evident in subject areas of the curriculum.

Teachers manage pupils and any issues of behaviour with care. Less effective teaching in a small minority of lessons was characterised by slower reaction by staff to loss of interest by pupils.

A good range of assessments are used effectively for children in Class 1 and in Class 2 and 3. They have several common elements, and are generally well matched to the children's learning and attainment. The school is in a strong position to develop shared patterns of assessment across the classes. However, some assessments of mathematics and literacy do not fully reflect the pupils' higher levels of attainment as observed in lessons.

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

Yes

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

The quality of the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is now excellent. The school has responded fully to the recommendations of the previous inspection to enable pupils to have increased opportunities to learn about other schools and communities. This has been endorsed with great enthusiasm by staff and pupils alike. Spiritually moving experiences are evident in class and this is enhanced by the setting of the school and the exposure of pupils to festivals from a range of faiths and cultures and places of worship as well as the natural environment. Behaviour is generally excellent and the school community works together to ensure that pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and the meaning of respect for others and for their surroundings. Consequently, pupils develop self-confidence and self-respect. Socially, the day is full of beneficial moments when pupils have time for reflection. The most significant improvement since the last inspection has been in the provision of opportunities for cultural development, previously judged satisfactory. In this area, the whole-school development policy is comprehensive and the log covering what has happened makes splendid reading, reflecting the response of pupils as well as staff. The school held a day in order to remember Nelson Mandela that included parents, and at another time a themed Italian Easter café. Pupils have written thank-you letters and produced drawings of these events. An interesting correspondence between pupils and the local Member of Parliament which involved communication with the local highways' department in respect to road safety and speed limits helped develop understanding of democratic processes. The school community is cohesive and the adults set an excellent example serving as role models in their commitments to the life of the school whether through organising outings and sharing activities or cheerfully taking on chores such as window cleaning or sweeping floors. This sense of partnership is fully reflected in the parental questionnaires.

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

Yes

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

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good and the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act. Pupils are appropriately safeguarded and they feel safe in the school; this is strongly endorsed by parents. Similar endorsement is given to the development of pupils' healthy lifestyles. Homemade lunches, meticulous attention to hygiene, maintenance of on-site cleanliness, involvement of staff serving as role models in cleaning and tidying, plentiful opportunities for physical recreation and exercise are evidence of the provision. The school has continued to strengthen its process of review of policies and the administration has played a major part in this. Annual reviews have reinforced the value of policies such as anti-bullying and the promotion of positive behaviour. The school has been receptive to further suggestions for coverage in areas such as e-safety and concern with hidden forms of bullying. The school has a written First Aid policy and training is in place and up-to-date for training staff in first aid and for safeguarding pupils' welfare. Staff have excellent relationships with each other and with parents and with pupils. This creates a positive and mutually supportive

environment. Premises are regularly assessed for risk and fire hazards. Equipment is checked and fire drills occur each term.

The admissions register is held electronically and will now hold details of schools to be joined by leavers when printed out at the end of each year. Attendance registers are fully compliant with regulations.

The school is aware of the need for cover when the child protection officer (CPO) is off the premises. The school has reminded teachers of their obligations under Keeping Children Safe in Education and teachers' meetings deal with issues of supporting children through the child study process.

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

Yes

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

The required safeguarding checks on staff have been made and are appropriately recorded in the single central register.

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

Yes

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

The four classrooms are of good size; they meet the needs of the pupils and offer an appropriate range of resources. The outdoor space continues to be used to maximum effect. It includes a variety of flower and potato beds, incorporates parts of the old churchyard and has now been supplemented with a grass lawn in front of the church, access to a local tennis club and a hard-surface play area nearby. The school has appropriate facilities for preparation of food, provision of drinking water and toilet facilities. The school has plans to develop its facilities further, both on site and in an adjacent building. The environment of the school is particularly stimulating in formulating the extension of pupils' learning. It is very well maintained.

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

Yes

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

The school's provision of information to parents, carers and prospective parents is good.

The school's website has clear, detailed descriptions of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and how this is practised in Calder Valley Steiner School. Some key policies, including Safeguarding Children, have been posted there, and the school plans to make more of them available in this way. Hard copies of all school policies are accessible in the school office.

The weekly newsletter is e-mailed to all parents to keep them abreast of events, dates and arrangements.

Termly class parents' evenings give insights into the activities and pedagogical rationale of the curriculum. A particular strength of the school is the clarity and accessibility of descriptive documents aimed at helping parents and enquirers to understand the essential nature of the school's approach to educating children. One such is 'Welcome to Parent and Child', whose friendly tone explains the "3 Rs at the core of Steiner Waldorf education: rhythm, reverence and repetition".

Talks have been held for parents about how the ethos and ideals behind the education relate to practical life, such as nutrition, keeping children safe and a creative approach to discipline.

Parents receive written annual reports which detail their child's achievements, engagement, progress and challenges across the breadth of the curriculum. Additionally, class teachers invite parents for individual consultations at least once each year. The questionnaires returned by parents all agreed that they are kept well informed of their children's progress.

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

Yes

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

The school has a comprehensive policy and procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints which includes all the required elements.

No formal complaints have been received in the past twelve months.

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

Yes

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

*This section is not a requirement of the Education Act 2002. The business organisation and management of the school were inspected by the Lay Inspector, who has written this section of the report.*

### **The quality of the organisation and management of the school**

Calder Valley Steiner Education (CVSE) is a registered charity. The school is an associate member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, and has expressed the wish to work towards full membership. Overall responsibility and legal accountability rest with the Board of Trustees, and they are appointed by the School Association (those able to vote at the AGM) collectively. They delegate to the College of Teachers responsibility for the effective running of the school. All educational matters are dealt with by this group, including delivery and quality of the curriculum, educational policies, pastoral care and school improvements following advisory visits and inspections.

Many practical tasks are carried out by parents, all of whom are encouraged to join one of the small support groups. This active participation flexibly supplements financial contributions and helps make the education provided by CVSE more accessible. A Management Team coordinates the various activities of the school. It includes a member of the College of Teachers, the administrator, one of the class parent representatives and the site manager, who is also a trustee. A key task of the Management Team is to monitor and support the work of the school working groups. It acts as a hub of communications, receiving reports from the support groups and making available to the School Association as a whole the minutes of its monthly meetings.

Since the start of CVSE much developmental work has been done on the principles and practice of good organisation and management, such as running effective meetings and cooperative decision making. The College of Teachers regularly works on consensual decision making, where constructive conversation and mutual listening are key. The management structure of CVSE defines clear lines of accountability within mutual flows of communications and responsibilities, termed “nested hierarchy”. Trustees and leaders of CVSE recognise the distinction between strategic direction and practical operation, and this clarity supports effective working in this close-knit community, where several roles and responsibilities are sometimes carried by the same person.

Trustees meet at least every two months, and recently spent an extra morning reviewing their activities, with reference to the Charity Commission's guidelines. The trustees are committed to upholding the principles and ethos of the school, as well as offering a wealth of professional expertise. They have ensured that school policies are reviewed and updated; one of them with experience in human resources management works with the school's recruitment procedures and supports the consistent adherence to CVSE's recruitment policy.

Professional development is a strength of CVSE. The teachers have attended courses run by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and been visited by several of their experienced advisers. Co-mentoring is a regular feature of the fortnightly Teachers' Meeting, and teachers visit colleagues' classes. The Education Coordinator, who is a senior teacher, ensures that all teachers are appraised annually. Both class teachers will forgo the imminent local arrival of the Tour de

France in favour of a Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship in-service training course in preparation for next year's curriculum work.

True to the mission statement of CVSE, meeting children's needs out of an ever-deepening understanding of child development forms the core of each Teachers' and College Meeting. Individual child studies are carried out with the participation of all staff who have regular and direct contact with pupils.

The pastoral care enjoyed by the children is deeply appreciated by parents, as expressed in the questionnaires. Several commented warmly on the commitment of the teachers and the happiness they see in their children's love of school and learning. Parents too, have opportunities for developing their interests, such as through educational talks, craft activities, festivals and carefully worded documents like the Readiness for Class One policy.

The successful work which parents do for the school results in an efficient cleaning rota, regular communications via the newsletter and very effective publicity, not to mention extremely active fundraising. Pupil numbers are growing and the school is making plans to accommodate more classes.

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

The trustees might like to consider the following suggestion:

- improve the management of the school still further by making use of, in its separate sections, the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Code of Practice (revised 2012) to monitor and evaluate the various activities of the school.

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

### **The overall quality and standards of the early years' provision**

The overall quality and standards of the early years' provision is good. Children make good progress in their learning relative to their starting points. This is supported by the staff having detailed knowledge of each individual child; their needs, interests and attitudes towards learning. Record keeping of individual progress is detailed, but tends to be descriptive rather than analytic to provide detailed indications for future learning and development. Children's personal and emotional development is good. They feel safe, secure and happy. This enables them to develop confidence in both personal relationships with one another and with adults as well as in developing their learning and skills. The requirements for safeguarding and welfare are fully met. Leadership and management are good overall. Self-evaluation, whilst satisfactory, tends to be descriptive and does not identify sufficiently clearly areas for development such as details of classroom practices.

### **How well the early years' provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend**

The early years' provision meets the needs of the range of children effectively. The educational programmes for the prime and specific areas of learning provide good support for the children to reach the expected levels of development. The staff emphasise the skills and capacities to learn which provide a good foundation for specific areas of learning. In particular, attitudes towards one another, including respect for individuals, and good relationships between adults and other children are emphasised. Such social development is a positive feature of the kindergartens' work and is much appreciated by parents and carers. The staff provide good role models for the children and their high expectations are used to engage and motivate children. At times some children are slow to adopt the staff's modelling of positive behaviour, leading to an increase in noise especially where an individual child seeks attention. However, staff deal with such situations before they become too disruptive. Links with parents and carers are outstanding. They are encouraged to share their children's learning and development. Annual reports to parents are good and the child profiles, which follow the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship format, provide good coverage of the child's experiences and are up-to-date. These records supplement the close and shared relationship between parents and the school on a regular basis. It is an integral part of the school's strong sense of community.

### **The contribution of the early years' provision to children's well-being**

The school's contribution to children's well-being is good. It emphasises practices which enable children to form appropriate bonds and emotional attachments with the staff. These good practices enable the children to be happy and enjoy what they are doing. Good behaviour is promoted and cooperative play is of a high quality, Few children choose to play alone, and then only for short periods. They show care and consideration for one another, as well as developing independence and their imaginations. Since the last inspection the school's use of the church grounds has enabled the kindergartens to develop their own outside areas on the school site. A recent advisory visit by a representative of the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship indicated appropriate ways of refining this work. Once a week one kindergarten goes to a nearby site at Swan Bank where a shelter has been built and outdoor experiences

are developed. There are good risk assessments for this work, and a hand washing station has been set up. Checks are made prior to each visit on which farm animals might be present and the children are taught how to react to the animals. Healthy eating is strongly promoted and the children are well aware of the importance of physical exercise and a healthy diet. Again this demonstrates the close links between the school and the children's home life. Transitions within the setting are well-prepared and the children know and play with the older children as well as with the staff. When children move to other provision, detailed notes are provided on their development and learning.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management in the early years' provision**

Leadership and management are good overall. The learning and development requirements of the EYFS are fully met where the school has not obtained exemptions from the DfE. The school has a detailed knowledge of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS and implements them effectively. Self-evaluation and performance management are satisfactory. At present the two kindergartens work in parallel with each other. The teachers formally watch each other at work once a year and the Chair of the College of Teachers also conducts an annual appraisal. Some aspects of classroom practices, notably ways of dealing with children who present potentially disruptive behaviour, lack a closer consideration to develop shared practices. The staff undertake a good range of professional development, mainly through the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship. Partnerships with parents are a strength of the provision. There are good links with the local authority and with other local providers, including the Cragg Vale Community Association as well as maintained schools in the area and a nearby Montessori school.

### **Does the setting meet the statutory requirements?**

Yes

### **What the setting needs to do to improve further:**

- develop more analytic and reflective approaches to recording children's progress and teachers' appraisal in order to set challenging targets for development; and
- consider strategies for dealing with potentially disruptive behaviour so that a more common approach can be used by all staff.

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)