



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Advice Note for an Additional Inspection

The St Michael Steiner School

January 2022

School's details

School	The St Michael Steiner School			
DfE number	313/6002			
Registered charity number	1094960			
Address	The St Michael Steiner School Park Road Hanworth Park London TW 13 6PN			
Telephone number	0208 893 1299			
Email address	info@stmichaelsteiner.com			
Chair of college of teachers	Mr Peter Brewin			
Chair of trustees	Mr Adam Norsworthy			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	156			
	EYFS	28	Lower and Middle School	85
	High School	43		
Date of visit	13 January 2022			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 The St Michael Steiner School is an independent co-educational day school. It follows its own curriculum, based on the educational indications of Rudolf Steiner and the school is a full member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. The proprietor is a limited company, the trustees of which are responsible for the governance of the school.
- 1.2 Children up to the age of five years follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum with agreed exemptions from the Department for Education (DfE). Teaching in the school is organised in three areas: the Early Years, for pupils from age three to six, the lower and middle school, for pupils from age seven to fourteen; and the high school, for pupils from age fifteen to eighteen.
- 1.3 The school has no head teacher but is led and managed by teaching and administrative staff working together as 'the college'.
- 1.4 The school has 13 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom one has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupils speak English as an additional language.
- 1.5 The school's previous inspection was a material change inspection by Ofsted in February 2020.

Purpose of the visit

- 1.6 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 3 (teaching)	Met
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 5, paragraph 25 (maintenance of premises and accommodation)	Met

Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints procedure)	Not met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Not met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – teaching [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 Teaching is well planned and shows a good understanding of the pupils and their needs; good subject knowledge and understanding; effective use of resources; and effective strategies for managing behaviour. It is effective in giving the opportunity for pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress; it fosters self-motivation, application and interest. It does not undermine fundamental British values or discriminate against pupils because of their protected characteristics. During the period that the school was closed because of coronavirus restrictions the school provided suitable online teaching for pupils to continue to make good progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]

- 2.3 The school meets the standard.
- 2.4 The school promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It promotes principles which enable pupils to develop self-knowledge, esteem and confidence; distinguish right from wrong; accept responsibility for their behaviour; contribute to the lives of others; and gain knowledge and respect for public institutions. Furthermore, it encourages tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions, a balanced presentation of political issues and precludes partisan political views.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.5 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.6 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.7 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.8 Implementation of the school's safeguarding procedures is not effective in providing appropriate support for pupils' needs, as required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE).
- 2.9 The safeguarding policy includes suitable definitions of abuse and appropriate guidance regarding possible abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil, including linking such abuse to bullying. Incidents of peer-on-peer abuse are noted appropriately in the minutes of college meetings. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) acts on and refers the early signs of risk or need, and ensures the school listens to the views of individual pupils as required by KCSIE. Alternative persons of appropriate status are provided in the absence of the DSL.
- 2.10 However, risk assessment procedures suggested by local safeguarding partners for pupils in need or at risk have not been carried out. The training of those with safeguarding responsibilities is up to date as required by statutory guidance although local authority training has not been available in the last two years. Annual training for other staff covers areas of generic safeguarding but does not relate enough to the context of the school.
- 2.11 Records of safeguarding issues are kept confidential, but they lack coherence. In discussion the school could not provide all necessary documentation to support its narrative of incidents. Records do not

always keep concerns relating to pupils and those relating to any adults working in the school separate.

- 2.12 Effective communication is maintained with parents, where appropriate, and staff are clear that they cannot promise confidentiality if a parent makes a disclosure which requires action to be taken by the DSL or external agencies. Pupils receive guidance on staying safe and show understanding of what they have been taught, including in relation to e-safety, and monitoring and filtering of technology is effective. Pupils report they feel safe and listened to.
- 2.13 The safeguarding policy gives contact details for required local agencies. Appropriate arrangements for handling allegations against staff are included in safeguarding procedures; they include seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officers (LADO). The school understands its role in reporting any person whose services are no longer used where referral criteria are met to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and/or the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA).
- 2.14 Staff show an effective understanding of their responsibilities, including in those areas which are the focus of most recent changes in safeguarding guidance, in particular elements of peer-on-peer abuse. Suitable recruitment procedures for staff are included within the safeguarding policy.
- 2.15 Staff interviewed showed good understanding of code of conduct and whistleblowing, but only superficial knowledge of the latest amendments to statutory advice. They understand that they can make a referral to Hounslow children's services, if necessary, but are less exact about the protocols for reporting allegations against staff internally. No member of staff with safeguarding responsibilities recalled whether any safeguarding allegations had been made against staff, and the school has no record of any low-level concerns being expressed.
- 2.16 An annual review of the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements takes place but it is inadequate. It lacks an awareness of the wider safeguarding responsibilities, and there is no evidence of challenge to the annual report made by the DSL. The trustee nominated to overview safeguarding is also an employed member of staff, which conflicts with their role.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9]

- 2.17 The school meets the standard.
- 2.18 The school promotes good behaviour amongst pupils. A written behaviour policy is drawn up that reflects the aims of the school and is implemented effectively. Sanctions are recorded in the college minutes which enable an overview to be gained of themes and trends. Throughout the visit good behaviour of pupils in both lessons and outdoor activity was observed.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]

- 2.19 The school meets the standard.
- 2.20 The school effectively implements its arrangements to guard against bullying. Bullying is prevented as far as is possible. The bullying arrangements are in line with the school's aims. Any incidents are recorded in the college minutes rather than a separate file, but this enables trends and themes to be analysed. These records corroborate the views of pupils that there is almost no peer-on-peer abuse of those with protected characteristics.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11]

- 2.21 The school meets the standard.

- 2.22 The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy. Records show that testing of electrical, water and other utilities is regularly undertaken. Staff are effectively trained in health and safety and deal promptly and appropriately with accidents if they occur, including through the reporting of serious accidents. Systematic records ensure trends are identified and steps taken to mitigate recurrence of any health and safety issues.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12]

- 2.23 The school meets the standard.
- 2.24 The school has a fire risk (prevention) policy which includes the elimination or reduction of risks from dangerous substances. A fire risk assessment of all buildings has been undertaken by a suitably qualified person. Fire procedures are understood by, and training provided for, staff. Termly fire drills are carried out and recorded. Fire alarms are audible and in line with the advice of fire authorities.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14]

- 2.25 The school meets the standard.
- 2.26 Pupils are properly supervised by qualified and trained staff. In line with the aims of the school, pupils are encouraged to actively use the woodland areas, and the protocols for supervision during this free time are effectively implemented.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16]

- 2.27 The school meets the standard.
- 2.28 The risk assessment policy clearly describes the lines of responsibility and the approaches to be taken to identify and mitigate risk. There are appropriate assessments of risk for in-school activities, school visits, and for the needs of individual pupils both while in school and in the surrounding area, and appropriate action is taken to mitigate risks identified.

Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25]

- 2.29 The school meets the standard.
- 2.30 The school is well maintained. College minutes reflect the actions taken to ensure that pupils are kept safe, including improving the security of boundary fences.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

- 2.31 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33]

- 2.32 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.33 The school has a complaints policy but it does not meet the requirements.
- 2.34 The policy is in writing and available on the school's website. It allows for complaints to be made and considered initially on an informal basis. Where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint, it establishes a formal procedure for the complaint to be made in writing.

- 2.35 The policy confirms the availability of a third panel hearing stage, but does not state that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school. The policy does not provide for the panel to make findings and recommendations. It does not stipulate that a copy of any findings and recommendations is provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and is available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher. The policy does not provide for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made; whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing; and of any action taken by the school as a result of those complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld.
- 2.36 The school could not provide the inspectors with a record of complaints. Any concerns raised are recorded in the college minutes but are not followed up in line with the statutory requirements for complaints procedures. The school reported that no concern raised has been considered as a formal complaint.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

- 2.37 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.38 The trustees have not ensured that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.
- 2.39 Oversight, policy implementation and management of safeguarding and of complaints are inadequate. The school's aims, approaches and structures are not an obstacle to the school consistently meeting the standards.

3. Regulatory action points

3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7

- Ensure that those with safeguarding responsibilities have a comprehensive understanding of their role, and in particular, that they understand and fulfil the requirement to work with, and consider the advice of, local safeguarding partners [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7].
- Ensure that information in the record of safeguarding concerns is adequately detailed and that concerns relating to pupils and those relating to any adults working in the school are kept separately [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].
- Ensure that all staff fully understand the training they have received in safeguarding, including their responsibilities towards pupils and the welfare needs of children in EYFS, and in the reporting of concerns relating to any adults working in the school [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7].
- Ensure that the annual review of safeguarding is sufficiently independent and rigorous to identify and correct ineffective provision in the school [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].

ISSR Part 7, Handling of complaints, paragraph 33

- Ensure that the complaints policy is amended to include the statutory content listed in the standard. In particular, state that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school; provide for the panel to make findings and recommendations; stipulate that a copy of any findings and recommendations is provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and is available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher [paragraph 33(g) and 33(i)(i) and (ii); EYFS 3.74].
- Ensure that an accurate complaints log is maintained which clearly details the stage a complaint reaches and the action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful [paragraph 33(j)(i) and (ii); EYFS 3.74].

ISSR Part 8, Quality of leadership and management, paragraph 34

- Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibility demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and c].

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the members of the college of teachers, other staff and the chair of trustees. They visited all areas of the school, observed lessons and breaks, and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.