

Lancaster Steiner School

Lune Road, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 5QU

Inspection date

12 February 2020

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(i)

- This standard was identified as unmet at the standard inspection in November 2018, which was conducted by the School Inspection Service. This was because the proprietor had not made sure that curriculum plans and schemes of work (SoW) were adapted effectively to take account of the full range of pupils' prior attainment and capabilities. Nor had the plans and SoW taken account of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The most able pupils were not being challenged enough by the curriculum. Additionally, the curriculum timetable on some days was limited, which meant that pupils were experiencing similar lessons consecutively.
- In the evaluation of the school's action plan in April 2019, it was found that leaders' planned actions to meet this standard were vague and ambiguous.
- At the progress monitoring inspection (PMI) of July 2019, the inspector found that senior staff had acted to develop more appropriate SoW. These SoW were based on an Australian Steiner curriculum and outlined the content of the curriculum precisely and logically. Nevertheless, the SoW contained no reference to the aptitudes and needs of all pupils. Nor were the learning expectations for each age group aligned to what would be typically expected for each age group. Neither did the SoW show how the curriculum would be adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils. Leaders had not written a new curriculum policy.
- In the evaluation of the school's action plan of November 2019, it was found that leaders had planned many appropriate actions to improve the quality of education. However, the action plan did not make it clear how the SoW would be adapted to improve the education of pupils with SEND. It also stated that leaders did not have a fidelity to one phonics scheme. This was considered unacceptable.
- A new headteacher took up her post in September 2019. Together with trustees, she wrote a curriculum policy. The policy has a clear rationale and an orderly approach. It reflects how the curriculum will be adapted to meet the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. It references how the curriculum will be adapted to ensure most-able pupils are challenged and includes support strategies to be used for pupils with a variety of SEND.

- The policy blends together the requirements of a Steiner school with the National Curriculum. It covers all subjects expected by the standards and includes enrichment activities such as trips and visitors. It has a clear intent and implementation structure within each subject. In this way, the curriculum prepares pupils for the next stage of education.
- This curriculum policy is supported by appropriate SoW. At the start of each subject SoW, there is guidance on how to challenge the most able pupils and how to support pupils with SEND. SoW cover precisely what is to be taught annually for each year group taking that subject.
- Teachers' daily lesson plans show that this policy is implemented across the school. Teachers discuss how they can support and challenge pupils at their weekly meetings, so that strategies are shared. However, leaders know that there is still a little way to go before the policy is embedded and consistent in every subject.
- Leaders are now using one approach to the teaching of phonics. Leaders have cross-referenced the phonic phases to correlate with the class groupings within the school, so learning is taught in order. Evidence showed that pupils are learning phonics earlier than in the past. Pupils know more and remember more phonics. As the school has an exemption from some aspects in the early years foundation stage, the phonics phases are covered at a slightly later time than would normally be expected. However, pupils catch up quickly.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part checked in this inspection are now met.

Paragraph 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(g)

- This standard was identified as unmet at the inspection in November 2018. This was because pupils were not making good enough progress across a range of subjects. This included the most able pupils and those with SEND. This was because teachers' subject knowledge and understanding were insecure. Teachers did not plan effectively to make sure that pupils' academic needs were met or that pupils were working at the appropriate level. Procedures for assessment, tracking and recording pupils' progress were inadequate.
- The school's action plan in April 2019 showed that leaders' planned actions to meet this standard were confusing and disjointed.
- At the PMI of July 2019, it was found that teaching and learning had improved. There was greater consistency of practice across the school. Improvements in the way that teachers planned pupils' learning meant that the needs of pupils with SEND were more consistently met. Teachers' subject knowledge was increasing, and a variety of teaching methods developing. A different approach to the teaching of writing meant that pupils were writing independently and making progress. However, teachers' understanding of what should be typically expected of pupils of different ages in mathematics, grammar and punctuation was limited. The teaching of phonics was poor. Most-able pupils were insufficiently challenged to learn at greater depth. This was because the curriculum was pitched too low for their capabilities.

- Additionally, although baseline assessments had been implemented across the school, it was too early to see how teachers were using this information to plan learning to meet all pupils' needs.
- The evaluation of the school's action plan in November 2019 stated that there was limited detail about subject knowledge training for staff. Therefore, it was unclear as to whether teachers would develop the strong subject knowledge necessary to teach the full range of subjects.
- Teachers' subject knowledge across all subjects has improved. This is because leaders prioritised this aspect. Together with trustees, they committed time and finance to the training of staff. Recent training has covered phonics, the teaching of reading, writing moderation, and personal, social, health, relationships and sex education. Teachers have a clearer understanding of the expectations for their pupils, especially in English and mathematics.
- Teachers use the baseline assessments to plan learning for all pupils more effectively. This includes the most able pupils and those pupils with SEND. Strategies included in the curriculum policy guide their work. Pupils I spoke with told me about the activities used to challenge their learning and about the support given to their classmates who need a little more help.
- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part checked in this inspection are now met.

Paragraph 4

- At the time of the November 2018 inspection, it was identified that the school was not evaluating pupils' performance well. There was no system in place for tracking the progress or achievement of pupils over time.
- The school's action plan of April 2019 did not specify precisely what action leaders would take to address this weakness.
- The PMI of July 2019 found that leaders were working to develop a 'Steiner sympathetic' system in relation to assessment. Leaders had begun to explore ways to track the number of pupils developing, meeting or exceeding the expectations that would be considered typical for their age in mathematics. Staff were unable to evaluate how well pupils were learning or the progress they were making. In addition, it was found that the annual written report for parents and carers did not include enough detail about a pupil's achievements or progress in any subject. It did not give parents an accurate picture of their children's progress.
- In the school's action plan in April 2019, leaders' planned action to meet this standard lacked detail.
- Leaders reviewed the annual report to parents. In the summer of 2019, teachers included information about the achievement of the individual child. This was a change from previous reports, which had specified the learning of the class as a whole. In the summer term 2020 reports, leaders plan to include two statements about the individual pupil's achievement: one which compares the achievement against the Steiner model and one which compares it against achievement expected in the National Curriculum. This means that parents will receive more valuable information about their children's learning.

- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part checked in this inspection are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1)(c)

- Leaders updated the school's safeguarding policy at the start of this school year. It reflects the latest government guidance and provides clear information for staff and others should a safeguarding concern arise. It is available for parents and others from the school's website.
- Leaders have ensured that the standard in this part, checked in this inspection, is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- This standard was identified as unmet during the November 2018 inspection, because senior staff, governors and trustees had not ensured that all the independent school standards were consistently met. There was either no, or ineffective, oversight of the school's processes and procedures, including those related to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The monitoring of the school's effectiveness was inadequate. Roles and responsibilities among leaders, governors and trustees were unclear.
- The school's action plan in April 2019 identified a range of appropriate actions which would establish appropriate oversight from leaders, governors and trustees.
- At the PMI in July 2019, the inspector confirmed that many of the actions stipulated in the action plan had happened. Leaders had taken appropriate action to ensure that many of the unmet standards, especially those related to safeguarding and welfare, were met. School staff and trustees had acted to improve the quality of education, but many of the improvements were at an early stage of implementation.
- The evaluation of the school's action plan in November 2019 found that that there was insufficient detail about the completion of planned actions, which made it difficult to know when leaders expected the necessary changes to be fully in place.
- Trustees, leaders and staff are committed to ensuring that the independent school standards are met. For example, the current action plan indicated that the independent school standards would become a standing item on the agenda of senior governance team meetings. The inspection confirms that this has been actioned. Trustees and leaders talk with confidence and knowledge about the independent school standards. They know what is needed for the school to consistently meet the standards.
- An audit of the skills of the members of the trustee board was completed and gaps in members' expertise were identified. New members with specific skills were recruited to join the board to support and challenge leaders. The new chair of the trustees re-organised the committees, so that the responsibility for the effectiveness of the school is now shared. There is a suitable monitoring cycle in place which incorporates all levels of leadership and management. Consequently, the trustees are a well-organised and committed team. Trustees, leaders and staff have sought examples of good practice in

other schools and used these to adapt practice and procedures and so meet the standards.

- Leaders have ensured that the standards in this part, checked in this inspection, are now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively;
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan;
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 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 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.

School details

Unique reference number	132095
DfE registration number	888/6040
Inspection number	10136876

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	Independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	9
Proprietor	Lancaster Steiner School
Chair	Nina Moeller
Headteacher	Mrs Elspeth Mukerji
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,575 to £ 5,850
Telephone number	01524 381 876
Website	www.lancastersteinerschool.org
Email address	enquiries@lancastersteinerschool.org
Date of previous standard inspection	13 November 2018

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed from September 2019.
- Two new teachers joined the school in September 2019. Additionally, four new trustees joined the proprietorial board since the previous progress monitoring inspection in July 2019.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The previous standard inspection was carried out in November 2018 by the School Inspection Service in accordance with section 109(3) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. At that time, the school was judged to not comply with the independent school standards.
- The school was asked to prepare an action plan. The plan was evaluated by Ofsted in April 2019. This plan was not approved by the Department for Education (DfE). The first progress monitoring inspection was conducted in July 2019.
- The school was asked to prepare an action plan after the first progress monitoring inspection. This was evaluated in November 2019 and not approved by the DfE.
- This inspection was conducted without notice to the school and was the second progress monitoring inspection.
- I met with the headteacher and four trustees.
- I visited lessons and spoke with pupils.
- I looked at policies, schemes of work, examples of pupils' work and minutes of trustee meetings.
- I examined the school's safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

Eileen Mulgrew, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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