

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**

Name of school:	Cambridge Steiner School
DfE number:	873/6029
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley Supporting Inspectors: Mr Ted Cohn Mr Peter Jones Mrs Linda Kelsey Lay Inspector: Mr Ewout van Manen
Dates of inspection:	3 to 5 February 2015

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: Cambridge Steiner School

Address of school: Hinton Road,
Fulbourn,
Cambridgeshire CB21 5DZ

Telephone number: 01223 882727

Email address: school@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk

Proprietor: The Trustees of Cambridge Steiner School

Chair of the Faculty: Mr David van Marle

Chair of the Trustees: Mr Mike Anderson

School Manager: Ms Tara Livermore

DfE number: 873/6029

Type of school: Independent school associated with the Steiner Fellowship

Age range of pupils and students: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll:	(Full-time)	Boys: 28	Girls: 21
	(Part-time)	Boys: 3	Girls: 0

Number of children under 5: Boys: 21 Girls: 18

Number of pupils with statements of special educational need: Boys: 0 Girls: 0

Annual fees: £2,910 - £6,600

Type of inspection: Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008

Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley

Supporting Inspectors: Mr Ted Cohn
Mr Peter Jones
Mrs Linda Kelsey

Lay Inspector: Mr Ewout van Manen

Dates of inspection: 3 to 5 February 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:

Cambridge Steiner School is part of the Cambridge Steiner School Project which also operates the Buttercups Little Kindergarten on the same site. This kindergarten is administratively part of the school, although it is separately registered with Ofsted and is reported on separately. The school was founded in 1993 and moved to its present site, a former special school, in 2007. The school currently has 91 pupils, a slight rise since it was last inspected in 2010. It has three kindergarten classes, which meet in the morning, and an afternoon care session. These classes cater for children aged from three to six years old. There are three primary school classes - Class 1, which has Year 2 children, Class 2/3 for Years 3 and 4, and Class 4/5 for Years 5 and 6. None of the children in the school has a statement of special educational needs.

The school has experienced a significant change in staff and trustees in the recent past and is developing systems of leadership and management to address its identified needs and to operate efficiently. The recent recruitment of a school manager reflects these needs.

The school follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum which emphasises the development of the child intellectually, emotionally and socially. This curriculum is extended through the use of woodland provision by the Kindergarten classes and has been extended in woodcraft work in the oldest class, and by weekly woodland visits in all the primary school classes, again in local woods.

Summary of main findings:

The school provides a good education. Members of the school with leadership and management roles are successfully addressing issues affecting the school and are establishing procedures to promote consistent development in the future. The curriculum is usefully extended by woodland work in the Kindertartens and the Primary classes. Across all classes aesthetic and creative experiences enhance the pupils' learning. Planning in the Kindertartens is outstanding. It identifies individual children's needs very effectively and uses these to provide appropriate activities which are then evaluated, forming the basis for future planning.

Pupils' feel secure and happy in a well-supported school community. The quality of teaching is varied, from outstanding to satisfactory. In most lessons teaching was seen to be good or outstanding, but the proportion of satisfactory lessons is higher than those which are outstanding. Not all lessons provide rigorous challenges for all pupils, building upon the pupils' prior knowledge and skills. Marking of pupils' work is not always consistent or regular. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as is the provision for their welfare, health and safety. British values are actively promoted. Provision for the early years is good with several outstanding features.

What the school does well:

- planning in the Kindergarten classes is consistent and meets the children's individual needs. It supports their learning and development outstandingly well;
- a harmonious social community is established for each child;
- relationships between the Trustees and the staff are good and are based on shared aspirations for the school; and
- most of the teaching is good or outstanding. It is supported by good adult-pupil relationships in the classroom.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

The school complies with all the regulations.

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

The school complies with the mandatory requirements of the EYFS.

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:

- improve the quality of planning and teaching to ensure that lessons consistently provide more rigorous challenges building upon pupils' prior knowledge and skills.
- develop clearer learning targets for all pupils; and
- promote consistency and regularity in marking pupils' work.

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 meets the aims of the school well. It celebrates fundamental British democratic values through its concern to encourage the importance of norms and rules, tolerance, mutual respect and the celebration of different cultural and faith traditions in establishing a harmonious community of educational learners.

The curriculum provides comprehensive coverage of all the required areas of educational experience, and is enriched by the quality of the aesthetic and creative provision, the inclusion of two modern foreign languages and a range of practical activities, such as cookery, gardening and woodcraft. Pupils also have good opportunities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills, including speaking and listening skills, which are particularly well developed lower down the school. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is embedded in the educational experiences of pupils across the curriculum, as teachers were able to demonstrate, but it is not clearly identified in curricular documentation. Planning to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those with English as an additional language (EAL) needs is good. Needs are clearly identified and appropriate individual educational plans to address these needs and support progress are developed, reviewed and adapted regularly. This process helps teachers to cater appropriately for their needs, although at present the EAL and SEND coordinators do not regularly undertake observation of these pupils in the classroom to monitor their progress.

In delivering the curriculum, the school follows the Steiner Waldorf tradition of a daily main lesson about two hours long, which includes a range of introductory activities, such as singing, poetry reading, playing musical instruments, dance and movement exercises, followed by topics, often subject based, that last up to several weeks. This good provision is supplemented with various shorter or subject lessons, further developing literacy and numeracy and extending curricular experience to subjects such as cookery, gardening, music, painting, modelling, eurythmy, craft activities, outdoor education, woodwork and modern foreign languages. The curriculum is also enriched through a number of trips and visits. These include visits to the British Museum and the Cambridge Anthropological Museum, to local craftsmen – blacksmith, grain miller and weaver - and a visit to Cambridge. Of particular note is the week spent visiting another Steiner school in the North Yorkshire Moors, which provides a wealth of educational experiences to broaden and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils also join other Steiner schools in the annual Steiner Olympic Games.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching is good overall. Most teaching is of good quality: there is a small proportion of excellent teaching as well as a slightly greater proportion of teaching which is satisfactory. Pupils make generally good progress, often reaching high standards particularly in literacy, as well as in speaking and listening. There is a strong focus on helping pupils to acquire new knowledge, to develop skills and to understand ideas through imaginative teaching. Teaching shows often high levels of

skills in key Steiner features such as chalk board work, storytelling, physical co-ordination activities and painting. Pupils stay with the same class teacher, where possible, over a number years and consequently teachers and pupils know each other very well. This provides continuity of classroom experience and has a positive impact on learning. Well-established daily routines of topics and activities enable pupils to feel secure and confident in their lessons.

Lessons are generally well planned, particularly Main Lessons, although the ability of pupils to make rapid progress and learn at the highest level of which they are capable is not always identified. A notable feature of the majority of lessons is class discussion in which all participate effectively, fostering creative and intellectual development and encouraging pupils to think for themselves. Teachers show good subject knowledge, although sometimes this knowledge is not always shared with pupils to best effect. Classroom resources are generally suited to the needs of the Steiner curriculum. Behaviour management is usually good or excellent, although there were very occasional instances of less effective teaching leading to low-level disruption.

Where teaching is good, activities are carefully planned and sequenced, relationships are excellent and the work is well matched to differing aptitudes and abilities, taking account of prior attainment. In these lessons assessment is accurate and challenging tasks enable each pupil to achieve to the best of their ability. Good lessons are characterised by clear instructions, well-targeted questioning, good pace and timekeeping and secure behaviour management. Pupils thrive in these good lessons, where a 'learning buzz' engages the children and teacher alike.

Less effective teaching lacks focus on challenge and achievement. Planning does not identify clearly enough what pupils will accomplish. Lessons are at times rather undemanding and lack creative opportunities, with some loss of motivation and interest. This can particularly affect the older or more able pupils in mixed age classes whose progress is adversely affected. Where teaching does not establish clear routines, for example in some subject-specific lessons, pupils' interest wanes, the pace of learning slows and very occasionally this has a negative impact on behaviour.

Teachers give helpful verbal feedback to pupils, and keep regular and useful records of pupils' general progress, but there is less information about specific areas of attainment. This reflects some inconsistency in the approach to marking. Marking is not used enough to give precise learning targets and to inform pupils, including the most able, about how to improve.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall and actively promotes British democratic values through the school ethos, the curriculum and the expectations of teachers. Spiritual development is integral to the education of the pupils, with many opportunities for development across the curriculum in subjects such as religious studies, drama, art, eurythmy and music. The school, in line with Steiner philosophy, places a strong emphasis on developing moral and ethical behaviour, founded on personal integrity. This reflects the principles of British

democracy. Pupils also demonstrate an increasing self-awareness and self-esteem as they move through the school. Promoting these qualities is identified by the school as one of the key duties of all teachers, especially class teachers.

Pupils become increasingly aware of the importance of having and implementing rules in their daily lives in the classroom and around the school, and in helping to establish a well governed and harmonious community. Older pupils can easily relate this to the importance of having and obeying laws in the wider society and the need for sanctions where laws are broken. Similarly, pupils have a very clear understanding of what is right and wrong and of exercising their rights responsibly. They readily take on responsibilities when they are offered, such as keeping the classroom clean and tidy. Some older pupils have identified the need for more efficient re-cycling of school waste and have set up and are operating an effective scheme to carry this out, under the supervision of teachers. Pupils have no formal roles in supporting and guiding younger pupils, but on occasion help them with gardening, read stories they have written to them and make toys for them in woodwork.

Pupils go to a local home for the elderly to sing and are involved in fund-raising for local and national charities. They also learn about the importance of the contribution they make their own school as they grow older, but the school does not explore in any great detail the contribution that pupils might make when they are older to life in the local community and wider society. Pupils' understanding of how public institutions and services contribute to the effective running and well-being of society is relatively under-developed.

A key aim of the school is that pupils develop a good understanding and empathy for different cultures and faiths in many societies through time and place. The curriculum provides many opportunities for them to do this, for instance in literacy, religious studies, history and geography, in which pupils learn much about different cultural traditions in many societies across the world. Pupils learn about and celebrate great Christian festivals, such as Martinmas. But they also learn about and celebrate festivals from other world religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. In doing this, the school is able to draw on the diverse cultural and religious backgrounds of pupils and their parents, as in the recent celebration of Diwali, where a parent came in and talked about what the festival meant to her and her family and demonstrated a traditional Hindu dance. In addition, the school has an annual multi-cultural festival where parents and children illustrate and celebrate the various religious and cultural traditions they represent in the school. These activities give pupils a sophisticated understanding of and empathy with different cultural traditions and faiths, as well as drawing out common ethical and moral values underpinning these cultures and faiths, which are central to democracy.

A central tenet of Steiner education is showing respect for other people, whatever their status, beliefs or values. Staff provide excellent models for this through the way in which they interact with pupils, demonstrating great courtesy, respect and kindness. Pupils are encouraged to express and discuss points of view, listen carefully to others and learn how to make decisions. This includes being involved in creating rules of conduct in individual classes and learning how democratic processes work. At present there is no school council. In keeping with its philosophy, the school is very careful to ensure that no partisan political views are promoted in any of its activities and that any issues discussed are presented in a balanced and coherent manner.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. The recently updated policy for safeguarding takes full account of the guidance 'Keeping Children safe in Education' and this is reflected in other policies, including those for risk assessment. The school has two teachers with designated child protection roles. Procedures for staff recruitment meet the required regulations as does provision for checking volunteers. The school implements effectively its policies to promote safety and good behaviour, and the records of incidents and subsequent sanctions in the event of poor behaviour are good. Discussions with the pupils indicated that there was no significant evidence of bullying and that pupils knew who to approach in the event of their not being able to resolve any issues amongst themselves.

Health and safety legislation is complied with, and good risk assessments are made for day-to-day class situations and for work elsewhere on the school site, in local nature reserves and beyond. Fire safety procedures are in place and the written first aid policies are well implemented. Recent training has ensured that the great majority of staff are trained, with the early years' staff having up to date paediatric first aid training. Staff are well deployed throughout the school. Admission and attendance registers are well maintained.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school meets the requirements for registration. It has a complete single central register which records correct information on staff, Trustees and, where appropriate, on volunteers.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

Premises and accommodation are of good quality. The school building is large for the number of pupils on roll, and provides ample space for the school's needs. The school is carefully maintained and cleaned, and the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff are well met by the premises. Classrooms are of a good size, are well separated and spread out around the building and provide good acoustics. A large hall provides suitable space for assemblies, physical education and other group activities. Natural lighting is very good, with large windows and ceiling down lighters, and, where needed, artificial lighting is of suitable quality. Toilet facilities meet requirements and there is a suitable sickroom on site. The school has attractive outdoor spaces including grassed areas and adventure play equipment which children enjoy using in their free time. Good use is made of local woodlands for outdoor lessons which provide a valuable extension of the school's curriculum.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The quality of information for parents and carers is good. There is ample information on the website describing the school's educational approach and ethos. An excellent selection of policies can be found on the website and these are also available in hard copy from the office. The school also has a social media page with current information.

There are two attractive and informative parent handbooks, one for Early Years and one for the Primary School. The handbooks help to explain how the school functions as well as ways parents can support their children's education at school. Noticeboards in the reception area and elsewhere in the school provide useful information about school and local events. The reception area has a display of staff and trustee names and photos. A weekly bulletin reports what has been happening in the classes and also has a list of relevant dates.

Regular parents' evenings provide opportunities for parents to find out about their children's learning and development. The informative annual school reports describe their child's development and progress.

Almost every family completed and returned the inspection questionnaires. These were overwhelmingly positive and showed that parents regard the staff as approachable and that they are kept well informed about their children's progress. Several parents wrote in some detail how happy they were with the school and reported how well their children were supported by the staff to become enthusiastic learners.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

There have been two formal complaints in the previous twelve months. The correct procedures are being followed and the complaints are in process of resolution.

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 is good. Following a period of change, the Trustees and staff have worked hard to establish leadership roles and management structures which reflect the identified needs of the school and the skills of those who have to address these needs. The distribution of responsibilities is appropriate and balanced. In addition to the monthly Trustee meetings, to which the recently appointed School Manager is invited, the Trustees also have regular

meetings with the Faculty Business Team, to which Primary and Kindergarten teachers and the School Manager belong. There are also Departmental meetings for the Primary and Kindergarten teaching teams. The success of this well-considered approach is evident in the consistent and rigorous planning and monitoring by the Kindergarten staff of individual children's progress. In addition each teacher has a link Trustee to support them. The people with leadership and management roles have good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles and are able to ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently. In addition these people fulfil their responsibilities consistently and are able to respond to changing circumstances.

The well-being of pupils is actively promoted with consideration being given to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional well-being. Policies and procedures are in place to support protection from harm and neglect, and the school provides a good range of education, training where appropriate, and recreation. Pupils are encouraged to consider and develop their contribution to society and their social and economic well-being is supported by the good relationships within the school, developing links with the local community and in fund raising.

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

At the time of the inspection Cambridge Steiner school was in a period of transition. Earlier this academic year a new School Manager position was created and four weeks prior to the inspection a School Manager was appointed.

The Board of Trustees carries overall responsibility for the school, but day-to-day management is delegated to the School Manager. Pedagogical aspects as well as personal and professional development are worked on in the Faculty meeting. The manager and the faculty work together in the Business Team meeting on education management issues.

There is a high standard of collegial working in the school and staff and trustees are dedicated and committed to developing the school further. The Faculty has monthly meetings with the Board of Trustees and each teacher has a link trustee. This creates a good working relationship and good communication between trustees and teachers. Clear minutes of meetings are taken and kept, and actions are followed up effectively. Staff appraisal is being developed initially with a peer appraisal programme. These appraisals are well documented and filed for future review meetings.

Policies are regularly reviewed and there is a record that all staff have read them and are familiar with them.

The Steiner Waldorf ethos of the school is maintained mainly by the teachers, who are actively engaged with Steiner Waldorf educational practice. The classrooms have a warm atmosphere and the teachers produce some excellent chalkboard drawings.

Parents are very supportive and active in the School Parent Community Group and carry out various tasks in support of the school and in support of the school's ethos. The school is aspiring to be a green school and through a dedicated community effort won a British Gas award for a substantial sum of money to support a green make-over for the school. This was used for new boilers and solar panels.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

Yes.

Although it is understood that the school is in a period of transition and that trustees and staff already have plans for development, the school may wish to consider the following:

- further development of the management structure so that it has more clarity and will be robust enough to manage the school well in all situations;

- developing the school's familiarity with the SWSF Code of Practice;
- forming a closer link with experienced teachers and administrators in other Steiner schools to help to develop and support the staff further; and
- creating a structured policy on professional development to build on findings from staff appraisals.

SECTION D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall quality and standards of the Early Years' provision

The overall quality of the Early Years' provision is good, with several outstanding features. Children make good progress in their learning and development relative to their starting points and they are appropriately prepared for the next stage in their education. The learning and care provided is good. It meets the needs of most of the children effectively, although some older and more able children are less challenged.

The children's personal and emotional development is outstanding. They feel safe and are very happy and secure in their environment. The provision for safeguarding is also outstanding, and is well-supported by the recently reviewed policy.

Leadership and management is good. It evaluates practice very effectively and secures improvement and progress based upon the identification of children's individual needs. This focus on the children's individual needs is a strength, although at times the consideration given to the broader purposes and objectives of tasks is less well considered.

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

The provision for the needs of the range of the children is good and practitioners demonstrate good expectations of them. The staff are enthusiastic, and engage and motivate children well. They plan effectively for children's individual needs. These plans include providing activities to meet these needs, and are in turn evaluated to inform future planning. This approach, which is consistent across the kindergartens, is outstanding. It also emphasises the importance of following the rhythms of the day, week and year, to reinforce and sustain the children's learning and development. Good attention is given to the prime and specific areas of learning, and this helps most children to reach expected levels of development. They are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

Overall, the children are supported well and acquire skills which enable them to develop and learn effectively. At times some children, particularly the older and more able ones, become distracted where tasks do not offer sufficient challenge, or repeat previous activities. Especially where adult support for activities is less evident, the children's concentration lapses and the purposes of the activities are not pursued sufficiently directly.

Liaison with parents and carers is outstanding. The children's progress and development is discussed and parents are encouraged to share information about their children. Assessments and other records are made available and shared between the practitioners and parents and carers.

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

The contribution of the provision to the children's well-being is outstanding. They are able to form appropriate bonds and secure emotional attachments with their carers.

The children are happy and enjoy what they are doing. Behaviour is good and cooperative play is well supported and encouraged by the staff, as well by the kindergartens having a relatively wide age range, enabling the younger children to be supported by the examples set by their older peers. The children use their imaginations well. The activities enable the children to develop independence, explore their surroundings, including the outdoor provision at the school and the woodland activities at a local nature reserve. This is a strength of the school.

The children's understanding of the value of physical exercise is well promoted by the daily outdoor activities and healthy eating forms the basis of the daily snack, which often includes food cooked in each kindergarten.

The children are well prepared for the transition into Class 1 at the school, although the transition into non-Steiner provision is less well supported.

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

Leadership and management is outstanding overall. The needs of the children are carefully considered within the context of the school's overall Steiner curriculum, and exemptions have been obtained from aspects of the EYFS, including those relating to literacy and mathematics. The school fully meets the requirements for safeguarding and welfare, implementing them consistently to create a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment.

There are extremely rigorous and effective systems for self evaluation, and these inform the kindergartens' priorities for development. The management system enables their priorities to be well-linked to those of the wider school. Performance management is well supported by regular timetabled meetings for the whole kindergarten staff as well as for the staff for each separate kindergarten.

Partnerships with parents are highly effective. Communication is regular and is a two-way process with information being shared between the children's key workers and parents and carers.

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