

Inspection of Beechtree Steiner Initiative

192a Chapeltown Road, Leeds LS7 4HZ

Inspection dates: 19–21 November 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Children arrive at school with happy beaming faces looking forward to meeting friends and the learning challenges set by staff. They behave well in class and clearly enjoy the trips to the library and nearby parks. These excursions away from the school make sure that pupils get to know about the area around school and the local community. Leaving school also helps pupils learn how to keep safe when crossing the road and when meeting strangers and their dogs.

Staff know pupils very well in this small and welcoming school. This makes it easier for staff to plan work for pupils to help them make as much progress as they can. Children in the Kindergarten enjoy playing together and listening to stories read and told by teachers. Older pupils follow a curriculum which is modified to meet their needs and ensure that they are ready for their next school.

Parents often volunteer in school. Many join the parent and child group which also meets in school. This contributes to the family atmosphere which stretches across school and helps children to settle quickly.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school follows a Steiner curriculum, but makes sure that pupils are provided with a broad, rich curriculum. This helps pupils to learn and understand more. For example, when children start Kindergarten they learn to count, often backwards and forwards, when playing games. They have lots of opportunity to develop their imagination through the traditional stories and songs told to them by staff. This provides pupils with very early literacy and numeracy skills and is the start of a sequence of learning which carries on across the school.

When pupils join class 1 and class 2, more formal learning starts. For example, phonics is taught regularly to help pupils learn to read. Regular trips to the local library give pupils the chance to choose books and develop a love of reading. Despite a later start than others of their age, pupils make progress and most are fluent readers by the start of class 2.

Leaders make sure that the mathematics curriculum is planned carefully. Books show that pupils' learning is built on year on year, particularly number work. Some books show that pupils do not spend as much time practising how to solve problems as they do learning about numbers.

Because of the small size of the school, staff know pupils really well. They are quick to spot if a pupil starts to lag behind. Staff also make sure that the right support is in place for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils learn humanities through the natural world and local geography. Pupils also learn through stories, some from the Old Testament. Teachers make sure that most of the humanities curriculum identifies what it is that pupils need to know and

remember. Pupils also learn some history through topics. For example, pupils recently learned about the Second World War through talking with their grandparents and painting poppies. However, this work is not always as well sequenced and offers less opportunity for pupils to build on previous learning.

Pupils' attendance is higher than the average primary school. Pupils are always polite and friendly towards each other and adults. Parents and pupils say that very little bullying occurs. British values are embedded within the curriculum well. For example, visits to the gurdwara which is next to the school enable pupils to develop an understanding of different cultures and faiths.

The school celebrates traditions from around the world. The school misses no opportunity to reflect the backgrounds of pupils, for example celebrating Thanksgiving for American pupils.

Parents are very positive about the leadership of the school and feel that their children are well cared for and enjoy school. Leaders and trustees have made great strides in developing a new and clear structure for the future. Trustees are now much better at taking a strategic approach to leading, rather than being heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the school. Trustees have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. For example, fire safety is a clear priority and all areas around the school are now clear and free from hazards. Fire exits are clearly marked and exits are free from rubbish and debris.

Leaders have secured an exemption from the early literacy and numeracy aspects of the early years foundation stage curriculum. All aspects of the welfare requirements have been met, ensuring that pupils are safe and happy.

The school promotes equality well. For example, pupils make special person cards instead of mother's day cards. Shells are used for snack plates. Staff reinforce how each shell is different and unique, just like each child. The school's equality plan carefully lays out how the school plans continual improvement in disabled access.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff spoken to were clear about the challenges to pupils in the area around the school. Leaders ensure that safeguarding updates are passed on to staff regularly. Risk assessments identify hazards well and give staff clear guidance on how to reduce and manage risk by their actions.

Staff are clear about what action to take if a child comes to them with a concern. Safeguarding records are stored appropriately and shared only with those concerned.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have made sure that the mathematics curriculum is planned and sequenced so that pupils build on previous learning. This is particularly apparent in number work and space and shape. However, the opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in problem-solving and reasoning within the mathematics curriculum are not quite so well planned.
- Pupils told us how much they enjoyed humanities, particularly learning about the local environment and the stories they learned in history. They also said how much they had enjoyed learning recent history by talking to their grandparents about the part they played in the Second World War. Overall, leaders ensure that the humanities curriculum is planned and sequenced well so that pupils' understanding grows as they learn more. While events such as Armistice Day offer opportunities for staff to incorporate aspects of modern history, they are not as well sequenced as other aspects of history. This reduces opportunities for pupils to learn and remember more.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	144620
DfE registration number	383/6005
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10110727
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Beechtree Steiner Initiative
Chair	Phil Toepritz
Headteacher	Cath Thurlow
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,061
Telephone number	0113 345 5858
Website	www.leeds-steiner.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@leeds-steiner.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 June 2018

Information about this school

- The school follows a Steiner curriculum.
- The school was last inspected in June 2018. Two progress monitoring visits were carried out in March 2019.
- The school relocated to its current location in 2017 next to a Sikh gurdwara.
- The school does not make provision for two-year-old children. A child and parent group meets at the school but is not part of the school provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- The inspection team met with the general manager, senior leaders, four trustees from the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees, the designated safeguarding lead, the staff member responsible for health and safety, and groups of children.
- We carried out four deep dives into the four subject areas: mathematics, physical education, reading and humanities. As part of our deep dives we met with leaders, teachers and pupils. We also scrutinised pupils' work and checked the curriculum plans for each of these areas, as well as observing learning in both classrooms within the school.
- The team looked closely at documents relating to safeguarding presented by the school. We also looked closely at the record-keeping provided by the school and spoke to staff about their safeguarding knowledge and recent training. We also spoke to pupils about how safe they felt in school.
- We observed learning in classrooms, looked at pupils' work and carried out brief conversations with a number of parents.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Robert Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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