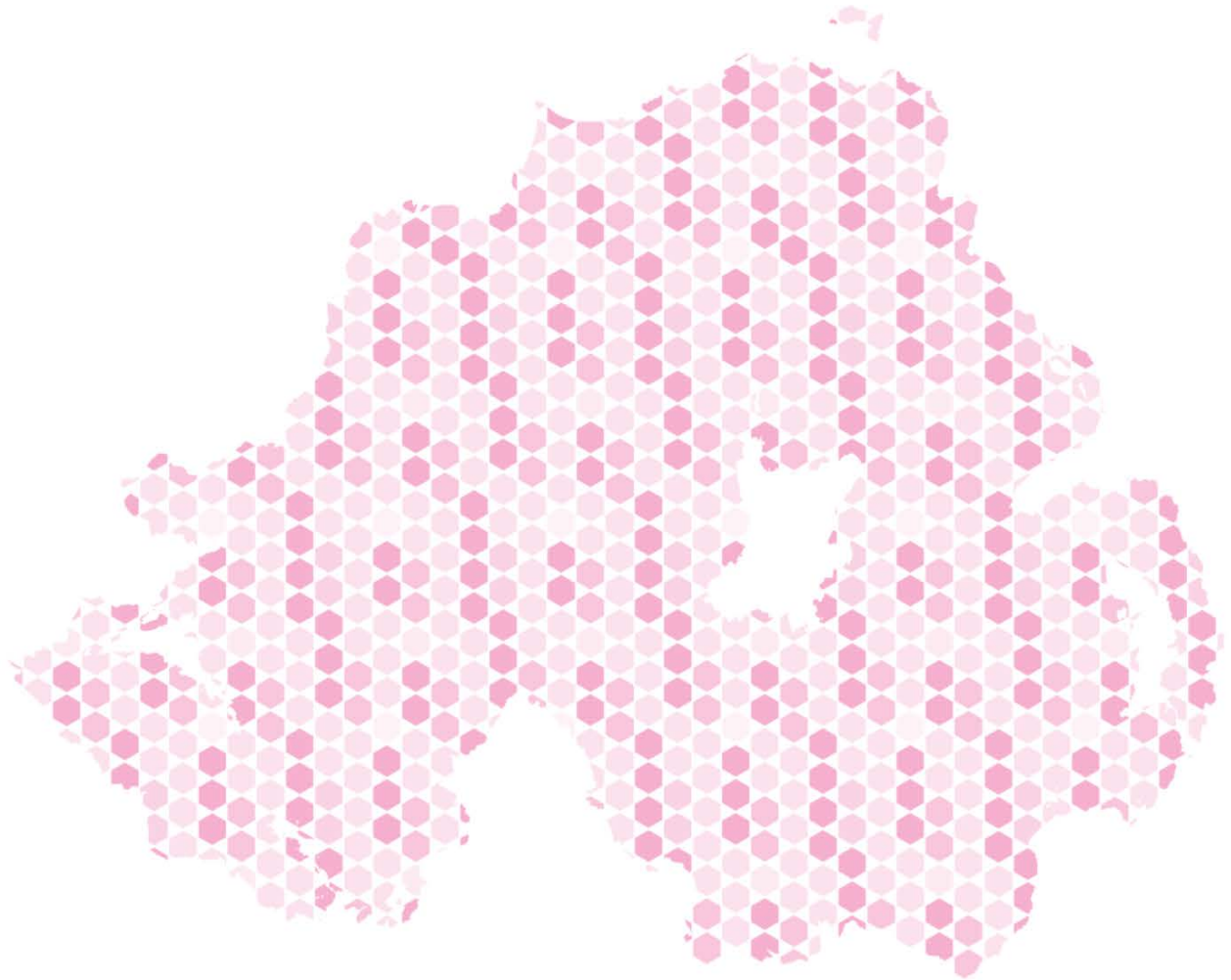


Education and Training Inspectorate

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL INSPECTION



Rudolf Steiner Co-educational Independent School, Holywood,
County Down

DE Ref No: IS28

Report of an Inspection in January 2020



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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1. Context

Rudolf Steiner co-educational independent school is situated on the outskirts of Holywood and is the oldest Steiner Waldorf School in Ireland, providing education from early years to GCSE level for the past forty-five years. The accommodation meets Health and Safety standards. An acting head teacher, appointed by the Board of Trustees, has been in post eleven months and the Trustees have recently been reformed with a wide range of relevant expertise represented. The school is a registered charity.

The learners come from a wide catchment area, extending from south Antrim to north Down. Over the last four years, enrolment has stabilised following a dip. Three of the lower school classes and one upper school class are grouped in composite classes by key stage (KS) and there are currently no learners in class ten.

Rudolf Steiner Co-educational Independent School				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Enrolment	108	83	84	85
% Attendance	91.8	91.5	90.8	92.8
FSME Percentage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% (No) of children on SEN register	N/A	N/A	27	25
No. of children with statements of educational needs	N/A	N/A	N/A	5

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A Not available

2. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the learners' achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- whether the accommodation is suitable and meets health and safety standards;
- the quality of provision in the school, with a particular focus on the implementation of the procedures for safeguarding and pastoral care; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

3. Outcomes for learners

- The learners throughout the school are developing well their attitudes and dispositions for learning. They clearly enjoy the varied interconnected approaches that enable them to express their learning in a good variety of different forms, to develop their general life skills and their resilience as young people.
- From a young age, they participate confidently in class discussions, articulate their views maturely, are developing well their listening skills and talk to each other confidently about their activities in a way which develops their understanding.
- The learners develop well, good problem solving and thinking skills in numeracy and the associated mathematical language, including solving realistic problems through a wide variety of appropriate strategies. However, it is important that the Kindergarten class promote early mathematical language through daily routines and play based learning.
- While most work in books is correct, the presentation of the learners' written work in both numeracy and literacy is generally poor; the whole school approach to the development of writing needs to be reviewed.
- There are too few opportunities to learn to use ICT to develop research and presentation.
- An analysis of GCSE outcomes indicates that the small numbers entered for public examinations achieve well, with most achieving grades A*-C across all subject areas. The more recent outcomes in GCSE mathematics are a strength with all learners achieving consistent A*-C grades.
- The small group of parents with whom the inspectors met shared their positive experiences of the school. They reported that their children are very happy and are appreciative of the opportunities to develop their creativity and thinking skills. They emphasise that the teachers know the children very well and the quality of relationships across the school is a strength.

4. Quality of provision

- Almost all of the lessons observed were effective in promoting learning with a majority being highly effective. These lessons are characterised by excellent working relationships between learners and teachers and active learning opportunities, which includes good use of the outdoor environment. Effective open-ended questioning deepens the learners understanding, encourages debate and enables them to offer well-reasoned, expanded responses. Highly effective, rich and appropriate play-based learning in the Kindergarten is characterised by sustained creative and imaginative play, often initiated by the learners themselves.

- The school recognises that the curricular planning lacks consistency in its coherence, its promotion of progression and sufficient differentiation to match the abilities of all of the learners. The use of assessment, including the use of written marking for improvement, does not adequately inform planning, learning and teaching. The whole-school approach has appropriately been identified as an area for improvement by leadership and management.
- The school endeavours to respond flexibly to the specific subject interests of learners and the trustees have reviewed the curricular provision in the upper schools with a view to broadening the curriculum,
- Meeting the holistic needs of learners is a strength of this school. Through their patient and sensitive support, the staff build well their social and emotional needs, their confidence and their self-esteem.
- Learners benefit from additional in-class support and withdrawal sessions for literacy and numeracy and the school liaises regularly with parents in relation to aspects of the provision. The recent review of the Individual Education Plans has improved the quality of pupil targets and now includes appropriate processes to monitor and evaluate progress.
- The arrangements for the care and welfare of the learners are very effective and impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes. A highly caring, supportive and inclusive ethos permeates the life and work of the school. The whole school community exemplifies its commitment to the ethos and values of Steiner Waldorf.

5. Leadership and management

- The one year school development plan identifies appropriate priorities which include the development of planning across the school, assessment and staff development to meet the needs of all learners. The promotion of the school within the community and the development of links and partnerships, is a timely focus. Consultation is appropriately taking place between the Board of Trustees, staff, parents and learners.
- The acting head teacher and most of the teaching staff hold third-level qualifications, including teacher education qualifications. A small number have specialist training in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. They work collaboratively, using their interests and skills to deliver a flexible range of subjects. The acting head teacher has a full teaching timetable and is highly dedicated to the school and its philosophy. Since his appointment he has worked strategically with the Board of Trustees and has begun to establish key roles, such as the pastoral support co-ordinator, to support the strategic development work within the school.

- A re-formed board of trustees, representing a comprehensive range of relevant expertise and skills, has, at the time of the inspection, been in place for eleven months. The trustees meet at least monthly; they are well informed about and accountable for the life and work of the school through first-hand reports from the acting head teacher; they have good engagement with the parents. Collectively they have developed a vision, and a wider and well-considered development plan, for the future development of the school and its financial stability. Parents and the wider community can have considerable confidence in the role of the trustees.

6. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding learners take account of, and reflects, the guidance from the Department of Education. The trustees have a comprehensive overview of all relevant matters and, as a recently formed board, are progressively reviewing policies in a timely way.
- In discussions with the learners, they talk about their strong sense of belonging to the community of the school and report that they feel safe in the school and are aware what to do and who to talk to if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

7. Conclusion

Rudolf Steiner Independent School, Hollywood, provides efficient and suitable instruction for the learners¹.

The school should continue to be registered to provide education.

¹ Education and Libraries Order (NI) 1986 Part IV 39 (1) c

Inspection guidance

The guide to inspection of independent schools is available at: [Independent Schools Inspection Guidance](#).

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

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