



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

INSPECTION REPORT FOR IONA STEINER SCHOOL

DfE No: 892/6010

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

The quality of education	Outstanding	1
Pupils' personal development	Outstanding	1
Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership, management and governance	Outstanding	1
Effectiveness of the Early Years' provision	Outstanding	1

Compliance with the Independent School Standards:

The school meets the regulatory requirements of schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Compliance with the Equality Act 2010:

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

Compliance with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage:

The school meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Date of inspection: 2-4 February 2016

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The Iona Steiner School provides an outstanding education for its pupils. It meets all of the Independent School Standards. Teaching and the curriculum are outstanding and all pupils, whatever their starting points, make exceptionally good progress and reach standards which are at least in line with and often well above those expected for their age. Teachers know their pupils well and plan teaching which meets the needs of individuals, challenging them within the range of their ability and providing very well targeted support and guidance which ensures every pupil makes progress. In lessons pupils are focused and fully engaged with learning. They persevere with tasks even when they are challenging. Pupils' personal development is outstanding and their behaviour is excellent. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about the British values of democracy, equality, liberty and the rule of law. They know about other faiths and cultures. The school's arrangements for safeguarding and ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety are outstanding, including the safe recruitment of staff. Pastoral care is excellent and pupils' development, happiness and security is at the heart of everything the school does. Leadership and management are outstanding. School leaders are visionary and they have created an outstanding team of staff who work exceptionally well together and deliver an excellent and exceptionally well rounded education for every child. The Trustees know the school well and there is a strong culture of school self-evaluation and improvement. They have ensured that all the independent standards are met. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and many provided touching examples of how the school had enriched their children's lives. Pupils are rightly appreciative of the inspirational teaching they receive and the opportunities afforded to them by the excellent curriculum. A number of pupils said that they missed school during holidays and were delighted when it was time to return.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Whilst not required by the regulations the proprietor should:

- Continue to provide an education of outstanding quality.

SECTION B: INFORMATION ABOUT 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. It follows the inspection framework agreed by SIS and the Department for Education (DfE).

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors observed lessons throughout the school in a range of subjects. They examined samples of pupils' work. They observed the life of the school including at break and lunchtimes. They examined the school's documentation, records and website. They held discussions with older pupils, staff and Trustees. They took account of the views of parents.

The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Christine Graham
Team inspectors:	Mr Michael Thirkell
Lay inspector:	Mrs Helen Weatherhead

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Iona Steiner School is situated in a residential area of Nottingham. The school was founded in 1985 and it moved to its present site in 1986. Teaching is inspired by the wisdom and contemporary relevance of Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy. The school is non-doctrinal and non-sectarian but has a Christian orientation. The school caters for pupils from 3-11. There are 84 pupils on roll. The school has identified eight pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil has an education and health care plan.

The Kindergarten has received exemptions from aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage and from completing the Early Years Profile. In common with other Steiner Waldorf Schools the school has no head teacher and management rests with the Trustees, the College of Teachers and the School Manager. The school follows the Steiner Waldorf system for naming classes. The corresponding National Curriculum names for classes in the school at the time of the inspection are:

Steiner Class Names	National Curriculum Year Groups
Kindergarten	Nursery, Year R,
Class T/1	Year 1/2
Class 2/3	Year 3/4
Class 4/5	Year 5/6

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is outstanding.

Pupils' learning and achievement

Pupils' learning and achievement is outstanding. Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent summed up the views of many, saying, 'My child's talents are recognised and the areas she needs to work on are identified. She never feels bored or held back. There is always something to interest her and capture her imagination. Her education has been rich in depth and breadth.' Inspectors agree. Teaching and the exceptionally good curriculum promote a love of learning in pupils. They are focused, they listen exceptionally well and they possess a wealth of learning skills which help them to persevere with even the most challenging tasks and make very good progress. Pupils are confident without being arrogant. Their spoken language skills are excellent. They sing beautifully. Pupils regularly recite long and often complex verses from memory. Their handwork skills are very good. They have exceptionally good general knowledge. Pupils in Classes 2-5 read fluently. Older pupils have a secure understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar which they apply very effectively in their own work. The presentation of work in pupils' books is excellent, letter formation is accurate and cursive writing well developed. Pupils have exceptionally good oral skills, they speak in well-structured sentences and they use sophisticated language. Pupils' mathematical skills are very good. Their participation in eurythmy lessons means that they are graceful, very well co-ordinated and expressive. By the end of their time in school all pupils achieve very well and the achievement of most pupils is well above that expected for their age.

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets all the regulatory requirements and the school's aims. The curriculum follows the Steiner Waldorf principles of intellectual, physical and spiritual development exceptionally well. There is a very effective curriculum statement which is well supported by the school's policies, plans, resources and schemes of work. The curriculum is outlined for parents in the school prospectus and on the website. The curriculum is rich and provides holistic learning for pupils of all ages which excites and inspires them. As a result they gain a love of learning and the skills to tackle new challenges confidently and by utilising existing knowledge. The curriculum is cohesive and plans successfully for progression between each year group. It takes account of transition between Kindergarten and main school and it prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. Curriculum planning ensures that all pupils have time to consolidate new learning. There is in-built repetition of skills and knowledge and this supports those pupils who need more time to embed learning. The curriculum is flexible enough to allow the most able pupils to learn at their own pace so that they always receive appropriate and challenging work. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is outstanding. Pupils who experience difficulty with aspects of learning are identified very promptly. The teaching staff discuss any issues and agree a way

forward. Pupils are then placed on intervention programmes which will always include additional help, often 1:1 within the classroom. Intensive therapeutic work is also provided and records seen in school show that this is very effective.

The curriculum is enriched by the very wide range of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school. The school has very good links within the local community and pupils have visited a local mosque, a synagogue, a police station and numerous other places directly linked to the taught curriculum. This brings learning alive for pupils and gives them a very good understanding of the lives of others. 'The Land', a wonderful area attached to the school provides pupils with magical learning experiences. It is used in formal teaching and for festivals, plays, to develop imagination and for quiet reflection. Pupils rightly recognise the extent to which 'The Land' enriches the curriculum and their childhood, giving them the opportunity to share amazing experiences with friends and family.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Teaching is inspirational and highly effective. Teachers are very well trained and highly skilled. They understand the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum very well and there is a strong focus within the staff on training and private and co-operative study. Staff new to the school are mentored by more experienced colleagues and this ensures that skills and expertise are shared. It is clear that all staff enjoy their work and are fully committed to helping the pupils to succeed. Teachers deliver the curriculum very skilfully. They form very good relationships with their pupils because they usually remain with the same class for all of its time in main school. This means that they know their pupils well and can plan tasks which meet the needs of every child.

Lessons are very well planned. Although most teaching is delivered to the whole class tasks are very well matched to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils are given a great deal of time to consolidate learning and information is provided in a variety of ways. The pace of learning is brisk and there is always something to engage and inspire pupils. There are plentiful opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to sing, recite and use movement and this brings grace and beauty to lessons.

Assessment is very effective. The school does not use formal testing but teachers assess pupils work and progress regularly and very effectively. Detailed records are kept which track pupils' progress and parents receive a very informative annual report. The school assesses the progress made by pupils identified as having SEND exceptionally well. There are regular staff meetings during which the progress made by these pupils is discussed and further support to meet the needs of individual pupils is identified. Pupils work is marked regularly and marking and the excellent oral feedback that pupils receive means that all pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Teachers continually look for new ways to improve pupils' learning. The school introduced Rhythmic Movement sessions as an intervention for pupils experiencing difficulties but this proved so successful that it has been extended to whole classes and is having a similarly positive impact. This exemplifies the attitudes and intentions of staff at the school, they are highly evaluative and constantly seek ways to improve the provision they make for pupils.

2. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is outstanding, reflecting the core ethos of Steiner Waldorf education. Spiritual values are strongly developed through ceremonies for example lighting a candle to greet the day or to focus reflection by groups of children and through the frequent use of song, stories and verse. British values are actively promoted. The foundations of understanding the importance of liberty and democracy are laid in the Kindergarten years and developed throughout the school through for example learning about democracy in Ancient Greece. Pupils of all ages have very well developed social skills and support and co-operate with each other exceptionally well in lessons, games and other activities. Through their excellent relationships with their teachers and effectively structured lessons they develop high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. They are aware of their strengths and speak unselfconsciously about what they need to do to improve particular learning skills. Pupils are encouraged to distinguish right from wrong throughout the school. Behaviour is exemplary in classes and around the school. Moral guidance is provided, in particular, through the regular telling of stories.

Pupils have the opportunity to develop an above average knowledge of public institutions and services in England, supported by visits to the local post office, a bank and visits by local police officers to speak to the children. Older pupils learn about Roman law as the basis of English law. In Class 4/5 they have the opportunity to visit the law courts in Nottingham and take part in mock trials. As a result of this and the teaching they receive they develop a strong respect for and understanding of the law in England relative to their ages. They naturally develop a sense of tolerance and harmony towards different cultural groups and through well planned activities they come to understand their own culture and beliefs and to appreciate others. Pupils in Class 4/5 have visited a local mosque where the Imam demonstrated Muslim religious procedures. Through this and other activities and visits, pupils of all ages and abilities have a very good understanding of other cultures.

Opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of and involvement in the local community have been developed further since the last inspection. Links are established with local and international charities through fund raising activities at the school.. The 'basket brigade' represents the baskets of food and gifts that are distributed to families in Nottingham by the children with their parents and the school is opened to the local community twice a year for social and fundraising events. The school ensures when appropriate that pupils receive a balanced presentation of opposing views and that the promotion of partisan political views are precluded from any aspect of teaching or in the life of the school.

3. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The school's provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. All staff are aware of the importance of safeguarding pupils and they are highly vigilant. The culture and curriculum within the school support all

aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures. The school has a clear safeguarding policy which meets requirements, is well understood by staff and is implemented effectively. It is fully up to date and reflects the new duties expressed in the July revision to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015, which cover radicalisation and extremism, female genital mutilation (FGM), and children missing from education. There is a well-trained safeguarding team who understand their responsibilities and carry them out effectively. Trustees ensure that all policies connected with safeguarding and child protection, including staff training, are reviewed regularly and kept fully up to date. There is an appropriate system for recording information.

Pupils do not use computers or the internet when in school but staff have ensured that they have learned about internet safety. The school has a very effective behaviour policy which is implemented very successfully. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that there are lots of adults who would help them if they had a problem. Respect for others and an understanding of one's place in the world is a strong feature of daily life in the school and if a pupil is being less than considerate towards a peer a gentle reminder is usually all that is needed to restore harmony.

There are clear and effective procedures for recruiting new staff and ensuring that appropriate checks are made on their suitability to have contact with children. The School Manager keeps meticulous records and is well versed on all aspects of safeguarding and the related human resources (HR) procedures. All the required information is recorded appropriately on the single central register and evidenced by staff files which are kept meticulously.

Appropriate health and safety procedures are in place and regularly reviewed. Fire regulations are met, and equipment is well maintained and tested regularly. Appropriate training has been given to staff. There is a clear written first aid policy and a number of staff are qualified in first aid. The school assesses risk to pupils carefully and minimises any dangers that are identified. Arrangements for out-of-school visits and additional activities in school have suitably thorough risk assessments. The school buildings are spacious, light and in very good decorative order. There is an ongoing programme of renovation. The school has specialist accommodation for eurythmy, music and German. It has a large gym and hall and a large wild area known as 'The Land' which is used for horticulture, gardening and creative and imaginative activities. The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils know how to stay healthy. Pupils are well supervised and the premises are secure and offer good protection. The school maintains its admission and attendance registers appropriately.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The quality and effectiveness of leadership and management are outstanding. The vision for the school has been carefully developed throughout the years of its existence and it allows all pupils and staff to excel. The vision for the school and the high expectations the school has for its pupils are shared and fully understood by the entire school community. School leaders model effective and appropriate ways of working and the care and concern they have for staff ensures

that they attract and retain excellent teachers and support staff. The school devotes a great deal of time and money to ensuring that staff training is up-to-date and meets the emerging needs of the school and government requirements. The Steiner Waldorf philosophy and ethos permeate all aspects of school life. Courtesy and exemplary behaviour are a strong feature of the school with all members of the school community exhibiting a warmth and openness which allows pupils and adults to flourish, fulfil their potential and enjoy their education or their working lives. This positive ethos together with the ambitious and visionary planning of school leaders and the school's attention to detail ensures that the school more than meets its aims. The school meets the Independent School Standards for premises and accommodation, information to parents and handling complaints. The school's relationships with parents and the wider community are highly effective.

The school provides an outstanding education for its pupils because school leaders and managers are highly evaluative and are not afraid to take action to bring about improvement or to ensure that the high standards within the school are maintained. School leaders know the school very well and their judgements about the school are accurate. There are frequent meetings at all levels which are carefully documented and this leads to swift and secure decision making. The School Management Plan has a clear focus on the most important areas which require attention and the required actions are carried out swiftly.

Governance

The quality and effectiveness of governance is outstanding. The trustees are well informed about the requirements of Independent School Standards and have ensured that they are met. Trustees attend the school regularly. They review the minutes of meetings of school staff and they hold regular meetings with school leaders. The Trustees have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, an improvement since the last inspection, and they are very well informed about all aspects of school life. The School Management Plan accurately targets the most pressing areas of need and finances are directed towards improving the provision made for pupils and renovating and improving the school building.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS' PROVISION

The Kindergarten is highly effective. Leaders and managers have appropriately high expectations for children's development and provide excellent provision and care. There have been key improvements since the last inspection, in particular with respect to the administration and the organisation of records. Records and procedures have been appropriately reorganised and all necessary information is now readily available. Effective systems are in place for supervision and early years' staff receive appropriate professional development. Arrangements to safeguard and protect children and to meet government expectations are excellent.

Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Teachers know the children very well and relationships between children and their teachers are excellent. Teaching introduces a touch of magic whenever possible through verse or song, or in the case of a story group a few notes from a lyre. Similarly candle light is used frequently and effectively to focus attention and to encourage reflection. Planning is very good and it is based on an excellent knowledge of the children's developmental and learning needs. All staff have a secure understanding of Steiner curriculum aims related to the age group. The curriculum is wide ranging, relevant and planned carefully to ensure that it meets the children's stage of development. Assessment information is suitably maintained. Engagement with parents is regular and a very positive feature in the early years. Parents receive helpful information about how their children are progressing. End of year reports provide summative documents which are suitably detailed. Equality of opportunity and recognition of diversity are promoted effectively through all activities. The Kindergarten is a harmonious environment for learning and children thrive within it. All children make extremely good progress and develop well relative to their starting points. Children with SEND are very well supported. Parents appreciate the caring atmosphere, where children feel safe, secure and happy. The requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare are fully met and staff demonstrate a strong understanding of their shared responsibilities for protecting the children. Children demonstrate interest and excitement during their daily range of activities. The curriculum provides an effective range of experiences which support the next stage of their education. It actively promotes British values where relevant.

The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children is outstanding. Pupils develop confidence through the positive culture and harmonious atmosphere in the early years. They progressively develop skills that will sustain them through future learning experiences, for example the ability to concentrate, to listen and to explain their ideas. Above all they show that they enjoy being with their teachers and learning. They have numerous opportunities to develop independence, for example through the ability to explore their surroundings and to use their imagination. Staff ensure that children have lots of physical activity and develop healthy eating habits. Through the rich range of experiences, they develop the early building blocks that will sustain them in their future.

Children of all abilities make outstanding progress from their starting points. By the end of the early years most children's development exceeds the expectations for their age. All are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	The Iona School			
Address of school:	310 Sneinton Dale, Sneinton. Notts. NG3 7DN			
Telephone number:	0115 9415295			
Email address:	admin@theionaschool.org.uk			
Web address	www.theionaschool.org.uk			
Proprietor:	Iona School Association Ltd			
Chair of Trustees	Robert Parry			
Chair of College of Teachers	Richard Moore			
Early Years Manager	Adrian Armstrong			
DfE Number	892/6010			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	£5402.00			
Age range of pupils	3-11			
Gender of pupils	Male and female			
Total number on roll	full-time	75	part-time	9
Number of children in registered nursery	23	1	22	
Number of children under-5	Boys:	9	Girls:	6
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	37	Girls:	31
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Boys:	5	Girls:	3
Type of inspection	Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008			

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, and members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship or Cognita group. The report is available from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk.