

24/04/2019

Dear Parents, Guardians and Pupils,

Thank you to all those who have already contributed feedback on the Inspection Report which was circulated on Tuesday 23rd April.

To that detail, I want to share with you our next steps in addressing the Areas for Improvement as identified in the Report, but also identified by us as additional steps that we are taking to provide a balanced, rich and dynamic Waldorf curriculum.

By way of background, as you may know, the Department of Education has recently instructed that all Waldorf Schools be inspected by Ofsted, where as previously they were inspected by SIS, an independent inspection body which now no longer exists.

To this end the Waldorf Curriculum finds itself benchmarked against national curriculum expectations and what the DfE and Ofsted criteria deem to be age appropriate expectations for all children.

This is a challenging situation as the expectations can be radically different in many areas, and both organisations are trying to find out how to fit the two educational approaches together in a compatible way.

As a school however we are determined to meet and satisfy all the areas for improvement as detailed in the Report within a 12-month timeframe and, out of this, provide a positive improvement for all of our pupils and the experience of being in our wonderful school.

I would like to briefly mention also that new practise brings along with it a kind of new language which you will see in use below. This is the language of official documentation and reports. It is unusual in a Waldorf communication, but we should not be alarmed by it, but rather just understand that it is the language that these kind of things are talked about in. Although the language may change, our ethos behind it remains the same.

I will now outline the key areas for improvement as identified in the Ofsted report.

Improve systems to monitor the quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:

The Trustee Board has appointed an External School Improvement Adviser - ESIA - (with experienced mainstream headship) to work jointly with the School Director and the School Leadership Team to bring improvements in teaching and learning. The ESIA will also help advise on the practise and effectiveness of the Senior Leadership and the development of good overall governance.

The Senior Leadership and School Governance Teams are introducing a new teaching support and performance management system, which also includes the development of the www.brightonwaldorfschool.org

pupil assessment and feedback (marking) framework, moderation of pupil's work and observations of teaching practices. These, in combination, will ensure that all pupil progress is tracked consistently to agreed expectations across the School, thereby improving the quality of learning and also ensuring that the standard of teaching is regulated with consistency across the School and improvement comes in line with our projected targets.

Improve the way Trustees hold School Leaders to account:

In addition to the points outlined above, the management of Trustee Governors meetings has changed so that at each meeting the Board has a full report from the School Director pertaining to every aspect of the School delivery with explicit reporting on the quality of teaching and learning.

The new school improvement plan and Ofsted action plan robustly link the improvements arising from inspection and the key elements of teaching and learning to all reporting to ensure awareness and transparency on where the school is at in terms of progress.

Trustee Governors, as part of their existing Lead & Link Roles, will undertake regular school monitoring visits to validate that school improvements are being made and are on track within expectations.

Ensure that the curriculum is designed and adapted to enable pupils to make strong progress across all phases of the School:

The Waldorf Curriculum is currently undergoing a renewal process to bring it more in line with 21st century demands both nationally and internationally. This will help us with respect to the national inspection criteria that we will be inspected under moving forward.

In an effort to fast track this renewal process, we will be undertaking an across the curriculum update of learning intentions both by subject and class group. We recognise that a lot of children develop more quickly in a lot of areas of our contemporary world than perhaps they did traditionally. To this end we will be looking to make the Waldorf Curriculum more challenging and stimulating for those that are ready, providing every opportunity we can to meet the creative and enquiring needs of our children as reflected in each lesson plan.

This initiative was already in process but will be developed more fully and in partnership with the network of Waldorf Schools nationally, with the end goal being an agreement of a National Waldorf Curriculum which meets the DfE criteria and is fit for inspection.

Improve pupils' attendance:

School Attendance performance is a mandatory part of inspection for any and all schools in the 21st century. A school that does not maintain a good attendance rate will always be graded down under inspection, an 'outstanding' school in every area other than attendance will be graded as 'good', and a school that 'requires improvement' will be graded down as 'inadequate'.

Recently you will have seen how our School has already developed new systems for logging and tracking pupil attendance and built in procedures for communicating pupil attendance to parents and carers.

The process for improvement going forward is to build on that reporting system and ensure that robust follow through is implemented where pupil attendance falls below the expected national attendance target of 96% for all pupils.

The key areas for improvement as detailed by the Ofsted inspection report really are about updating and creating new administrative processes that surround and maintain our traditional core Waldorf values and teaching practices. Some of the areas that need to be matched up are certainly a bit tricky – but these transformative steps will enable our education to be updated in line with contemporary expectations while ensuring that our pupils are receiving the highest quality Waldorf education.

I will undertake to keep parents and pupils informed of all developments as we move down the path of improvement together.

Kind Regards
Damian Mooncie
School Director