



The St Michael Steiner School **PROSPECTUS**



Receive the child in reverence
Educate in love
Let the child go forth in freedom



From certainty of heart
And from steadfastness of soul,
May there reign here
Spirit-strength in love;
May there work here
Spirit-light in goodness;
That we may bring to young human beings,
Bodily strength for work;
Inwardness of soul;
Clarity of spirit;
That young hearts and minds may find here
Servers of the light,
Endowed with strength,
Who will guard and cherish them,
Who will think in their hearts
Of the spirit that should reign in this place,
So that the foundation may be firm
Upon which there shall live and weave and work:
Wisdom that bestows freedom;
Strengthening spirit-power,
All-revealing spirit-life.



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THE ST MICHAEL STEINER SCHOOL was founded in 2001 by teachers who have many years experience of working in London. We are committed to establishing a Steiner school which is an integral part of the community and which really addresses the needs of the children who live in this city. The unique opportunity of sharing premises with West Hill Primary School in Wandsworth – the possibilities for creative co-operation between us – provides an ideal environment in which to found such a school.

The cosmopolitan nature of life in London brings the children into daily contact with people from many different backgrounds, so that the need for tolerance and understanding is not just taught but experienced. By nurturing in the children a deep respect for all human beings and an enthusiastic and active interest in the world, we aim to help them orientate themselves towards whatever comes to meet them in life, while they are growing and when they are adults.

"Those people who do not allow the current crisis of civilisation to pass by in a kind of soul sleep, but fully experience it, will see that it did not originate in institutions that simply missed their goals and that simply need improvement. Those people will look for the cause deep in human thinking, feeling and will. They will also acknowledge that the education of the coming generation is one of the ways leading to a revitalisation of our social life."

RUDOLF STEINER

WHAT IS STEINER WALDORF EDUCATION? In 1919, The Waldorf School was founded in Stuttgart, Germany, under the guidance of Austrian scientist and philosopher Rudolf Steiner. The first Waldorf – or Steiner – school in the English speaking world opened in south London in 1925. Since then, the movement has spread internationally and Steiner Waldorf education is now one of the largest independent schools movements in the world, having more than 700 schools in over 50 countries.

"From Play, through Beauty to Work. This is a golden path for education. In later life the most abstract tasks, the most difficult techniques, do not arouse antipathy if this path has been followed during childhood."

RUDOLF STEINER



Each of these schools, whilst being independent and part of its local community, shares an approach to education behind which stands a deep understanding of the human being in body, soul and spirit, which Rudolf Steiner wrote and spoke about in several hundred books and lectures during his life. He called this knowledge 'Anthroposophy' – literally 'wisdom of the human being' – and in it he described and characterised the different stages of development which can be observed in the journey through childhood (and also through adulthood). In his lectures on education, he gave many indications for suitable subject matter and approaches to teaching for different ages but always stressed that teachers must be free to interpret these indications in their own way. Indeed, he said, if they did not do so, Steiner Waldorf education would become a method as good as, but no better than, many other methods.

"The Waldorf School is not an 'alternative school' like so many others, founded on the belief that it will correct all errors in education. It is founded on the idea that the best principles and the best will in this field can come into effect only if the teacher understands human nature. However, this understanding is not possible without developing an active interest in all of human social life. Through a teacher who understands the soul, who understands people, the totality of social life affects the new generation struggling into life. People will emerge from this school fully prepared for life."

RUDOLF STEINER

THE EARLY YEARS in Steiner Waldorf schools, like most educational systems in Europe, formal learning does not begin until the children are in their seventh year. The time when they naturally become ready for school is usually marked by the change of teeth. Before that, all of their life forces are needed to develop a strong, healthy body; to draw on these forces for intellectual work during the first seven years would be to compromise that development.

The Early Years in our school means provision for children between the ages of three and seven. This includes parent and child groups and Kindergarten. Parents can bring their children to parent and child groups from birth; these are as much an opportunity for parents to meet and talk to each other as for their children to play. They can also provide an introduction to Steiner



Waldorf education as they are organised and run by trained teachers out of an anthroposophical understanding of the young child.

Between the ages of three and seven, the real work of children is their creative free play, through which their will forces are strengthened while, at the same time, they learn to become social beings and to integrate into a group. The Kindergarten provides an environment for this play and one in which the children can learn about the world through healthy imitation, which is the natural impulse of children at this age. Toys are of natural materials and as unfinished as possible – simple dolls, plain wooden trucks, stones and sticks for building as well as planks, tables, chairs and play stands for larger structures, pieces of cloth in beautiful colours for dressing up, wrapping dolls and making walls – so that the child can ‘finish’ them with his or her own imagination. There are also more structured activities during the morning such as painting, drawing, sewing, beeswax modelling, baking and simple woodworking as well as more formal, adult-led social ones like puppet shows, story telling, Eurythmy, circle games, singing and small meals prepared and eaten together.

A clear daily, weekly and seasonal rhythm brings a sense of belonging and security, allowing each child to develop at his or her own pace. Then, about halfway through their seventh year, the children are usually ready to enter the Lower School.

"In the beginning the child just plays, but he plays in earnest. There is only one difference between the play of the child and the work of the adult. It is that the adult adapts himself to the outer utility that the world demands; his work is determined from without. Play is determined from within, through the being of the child which wants to unfold. Up to now very little has been done to introduce the child in the right way to the complicated life of today. It is the task of the school gradually to lead him over from play into work. If we once find the answer to the question how can we metamorphose play into work, we shall have solved the fundamental problem of all early years education. Our basis ought to be the fact that the small child's most ardent wish is to imitate the work of grown-up people, whether it is done with a spade or a knitting needle."*

RUDOLF STEINER

**or, in our time, a shopping trolley, a washing machine, a car or a lawn mower.*



LOWER SCHOOL teachers in Steiner Waldorf schools work out of Anthroposophy and, through their own continuing observation of the children, try to meet their changing needs in a creative and living way, bringing them challenges as well as encouragement and joy in their work.

In order to be able to work in this way, a good relationship must grow between teacher and child and between teacher and parent; ideally the children have the same Class Teacher from Class 1 to Class 8 – age seven to fourteen – so that this three-way relationship can develop and each child's strengths and weaknesses are brought into balance as far as possible.

"If you notice in the right way, with sensitivity, what wants to develop in people at six or seven years of age, and if you have not become a teacher but are a teacher, then an awareness for this most wonderful riddle awakens through the innermost living forces... the developing person continuously offers himself to your soul's eye." RUDOLF STEINER

THE MAIN LESSON the Class Teacher takes the Main Lesson, a two hour lesson first thing every morning in which subjects such as writing and reading, maths, mythology and, later, geography, history and sciences are taught individually in three or four week blocks. In this way, each topic can be entered into deeply and thoroughly for that time and, through continuity, the children can form a strong connection with their work. The Main Lesson is carefully and rhythmically structured so



that the children have to listen, work independently, participate and think at different times and also so that their artistic and imaginative nature is developed; Main Lessons often involve singing, music, recitation, movement, painting and stories as well as writing and drawing.

SUBJECT LESSONS in Eurythmy, games, music, knitting, painting, wax modelling, form drawing, foreign languages and religion are taught from Class 1 onwards, sometimes by the Class Teacher and sometimes by specialist teachers. The more intellectual subject lessons are in the morning after the Main Lesson wherever possible, with artistic and practical ones in the afternoon. Other subjects, such as crochet, sewing, clay modelling, woodwork, gardening and gym, are introduced later, each at an appropriate age to meet the developmental needs of the children.

"It will always be a question of finding out what the development of the child demands at each age of life. For this we need real observation and knowledge of Man. The child up to the ninth or tenth year is really demanding that the whole world of external nature shall be made alive, because he does not yet see himself as separate from it. In the form of stories, descriptions and pictorial representations of all kinds, we give the child in an artistic form what he himself finds in his own soul."

RUDOLF STEINER

EURYTHMY is an artistic form of movement which relates both to speech and to music; different movements correspond to different sounds or notes so that the sound becomes visible. Eurythmy lessons are given throughout the school. Curative Eurythmy is also provided by the school and can help with many learning and behavioural problems.

GAMES at first, the children play games which help them to develop social skills, to master their own bodies and which help them to grow in a balanced way rather than encourage them to test and measure themselves against each other. Although competition is not actively discouraged, it is something that comes naturally to the children and does not need to be encouraged in a formal way through sports. The children do not play competitive team sports until they are about twelve,



when they are old enough to co-operate, to appreciate the games for their own sake – rather than just to win – and to cope with losing. From Class 3 they also do something called ‘Bothmer Gymnastics’, which has been developed in Steiner Waldorf schools and is taught by instructors who undergo five years training in movement and physiology. In Class 5 they train in classical athletics – long distance running, sprinting, javelin, discus, high and long jump and also classical wrestling. At the end of the year they take part in a national ‘Greek Olympics’ at Michael Hall school in Sussex. Activities such as swimming, skating, climbing and cycling can also be arranged to suit individual classes.

UPPER SCHOOL after the Class Teacher period, when the children are in their fifteenth year, they go into the Upper School. The Main Lesson blocks are now taught by specialist teachers. Classes 9 – 12 or 13 no longer have a Class Teacher but a class guardian who undertakes their pastoral care and may teach some subjects or Main Lesson blocks.

At present London does not have an Upper School. For information about Steiner Waldorf Upper Schools in Britain and further information about Steiner Waldorf education, please contact:
The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row, East Sussex RH18 5JA
tel: 01342 822115 Fax: 01342 826004
mail@Waldorf.compulink.co.uk, www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk

TELEVISION as well as videos, film, DVDs, recorded music, computers and electronic games have a very powerful effect on children and it is very important that children’s exposure to them is limited. It can take several days for the effects of a single video to wear off. If children are watching every day, the effects never wear off at all; many children now speak a lot of the time in ‘cartoon’ voices, make ‘sound effects’ to accompany their jerky movements (kicking, punching) and compulsively repeat lines from videos they have seen over and over again. This is now seen as ‘normal’ childish behaviour, but it comes from these media, not from the children themselves. In Steiner Waldorf schools, the teaching relies very much on the child taking in the content of a



lesson, going home and sleeping and then coming back the next day to recall and work with it. During the night, the lesson will have been digested, together with the mental pictures made by the child himself, and he is able to relate to and understand it better than he could the previous day. If children are watching TV, or using any of the other electronic devices mentioned, after school or especially just before bed or in the morning, the strong images and noises overwhelm the subtle pictures they have formed within themselves with their own imagination and shut them out, so that the child, when you say 'princess', or 'frog' will only be able to picture Disney's Sleeping Beauty or Kermit from Sesame Street; the opportunity to use his own imagination is denied him. Young children need real human beings to imitate in order to develop in a healthy way, and if they are exposed to these distorted pictures, sounds and actions on a daily basis they will imitate them instead while their senses gradually become numbed to finer, real human qualities.

"The child in the first seven years is wholly sense-organ, and reacts to all the impressions aroused in him by the people around him. Therefore the essential thing is not to imagine that the child can be taught what is good or bad, that he can be taught this or that, but to know that everything that is done in his presence is transformed in his childish organism into spirit, soul and body."

RUDOLF STEINER

COMPUTERS ITC is introduced in Steiner Waldorf schools after the age of fourteen although most children are using computers at home by this time. There is no evidence that this is a disadvantage for the children in terms of acquiring the necessary skills. On the contrary, there is a great deal of concern over the harm done by introducing young children to computers.

EXAMS in the Lower School there is no formal testing of children except screening for learning difficulties. In most Upper Schools the children can take GCSEs and A levels, although in some schools these are taken a year later than in mainstream schools and consequently the results,



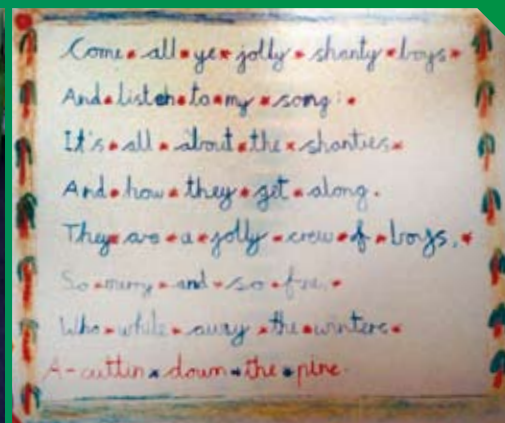
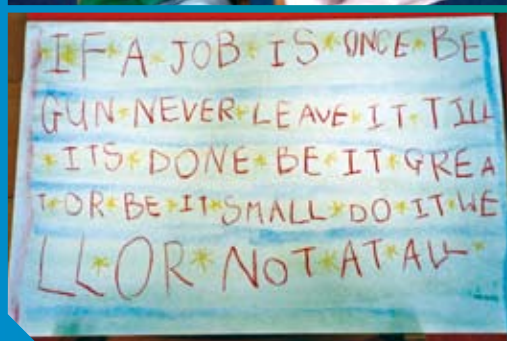
which overall are well above the national average, are not included in national league tables. Some schools have also developed a programme whereby the Steiner Waldorf Upper School Curriculum is accredited under the Open College Network.

REPORTS at the end of each year, beginning in Class 1, the Class Teacher will provide a written report about each child. These reports are primarily for parents, but they can be shared with older children. At the end of Class 2 many Class Teachers screen the whole class for reading, writing and numeracy, but the close and continuous relationship between the Class Teacher and the children makes it possible for the children's progress to be monitored very closely and any difficulties can be spotted early. Regular communication with parents through individual meetings at teachers' surgeries and parents' meetings helps to keep parents informed and provides an opportunity for parents to voice any concerns they have about their children's education.

WHAT IF A CHILD DOESN'T GET ON WITH HIS CLASS TEACHER? This very rarely happens, simply because the core of a Class Teacher's work is to understand and work with each child's needs and temperament, so that it is absolutely essential that a relationship of mutual trust and respect is established. If this was not felt to be happening, the teachers would work together with the Class Teacher and with the child's parents to determine the best course of action.

THE FACULTY AND THE COLLEGE OF TEACHERS all of the teachers carry collective responsibility for the school and meet once a week as the Faculty. The College of Teachers, composed of full-time teachers who have been in the school for at least one year, oversees the school's general wellbeing. The College also meets once a week.

THE SCHOOL DOCTOR the School has an anthroposophical doctor, who visits once a term. The doctor can see five children, chosen by the teachers, on each visit and advises teachers and parents of any help the children may need. On these visits the doctor gives advice from an



educational point of view and may prescribe remedies, anthroposophical medicines, pedagogical exercises and therapies to help with many different problems from dyslexia to poor eyesight. Almost all children can be helped in some way and it is our aim that everyone should see the doctor at least once during their time at the school.

LEARNING SUPPORT the school employs a Learning Support teacher and part-time classroom assistants to give extra help. We develop our Learning Support also by continuing to train Teachers to screen children for learning difficulties and to provide support. This can be done in the class as a whole during Main Lesson or in separate lessons after school or at other times during the day. Class teachers have attended conferences and INSET days on Learning Support as part of their ongoing training. The class teaching system lends itself to this way of working because the Class Teachers know the children very well. We can provide curative Eurythmy when it is prescribed by the doctor and we are also in contact with independent Learning Support teachers and Educational Psychologists to whom we can refer children when the need arises.

WORKING GROUPS the work of running the school is delegated by the faculty to smaller groups as needed, for example, fundraising, publicity and communications, craft and social, maintenance and premises. Each group is made up of parents and friends of the school and includes at least one teacher. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the school in this way.

TRUSTEES the school is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity and, as such, must have directors and Trustees who are not employed by the school. At present, the school has three Trustees who meet with the Faculty and representatives from the Mandate groups once a term. At the most basic level, the Trustees are responsible for seeing that the school is run legally. However, in this case, they were also chosen because they are interested and involved in Steiner Waldorf education and can contribute from their knowledge and experience.



THE ASSOCIATION in 2004 – 2005 the school will be establishing an Association – a body of people (staff, parents, friends of the school) who are able and want to make a commitment to helping to carry responsibility for the school. Mandate holders and, in future, Trustees of the school, will be drawn from this body. Anyone can become an Association member on application to the Faculty. Scheduled meetings are twice yearly, but there may be others.

QUALITY CARE each school is independent and self governing but the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship advises and oversees the work that goes on in all schools. Steiner Waldorf schools are also inspected by OFSTED and are required to meet their standards before being fully registered with the DfES. Schools are also expected to provide mentoring and advice for their teachers and to ensure that good standards of teaching and administration are maintained.

FUNDING at present, all Steiner Waldorf schools are charities funded entirely from parental and voluntary contributions and, because they do not wish to be exclusive, believing that it is healthy for children from all backgrounds to learn to live together, school fees are generally lower than in other private schools and bursaries are offered wherever possible. However, this usually means that the budget is quite small and sometimes the school community is asked to raise money for something which is needed, but which has not been budgeted for. At the moment, there is funding available from the government for four year-olds, provided we meet their regulations; some Steiner Waldorf Kindergartens including ours are receiving this. Beyond this, independent schools are only funded if they teach the national curriculum, which Steiner Waldorf schools do not and would not do. There are ongoing discussions with the education department and the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship to bring our schools into the maintained sector, but this will not happen in the near future. We have an active fundraising group who raise money to enable the school to expand and develop. Activities have included fairs, craft-making and raffles. If you would like to make a donation, please contact the school.



UNDERSTANDING STEINER WALDORF EDUCATION the way we work with the children is very different from what most parents have experienced. It is vital that parents understand the education and what supports it so that they, in turn, can support their children. We aim to provide workshops and study groups for parents as well as talks by experienced educationalists and those working in related fields.

WEB LINKS

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF): www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk

Waldorf World: www.waldorfworld.net

European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE): www.ecswe.org

Association of Waldorf Schools of North America: www.awsna.org

Waldorf Resources: www.waldorfresources.org

The Online Waldorf Library: www.waldorflibrary.org

Anthroposophical Society - UK: www.anthroposophy.org.uk

News Network Anthroposophy - UK: www.anth.org.uk

Rudolf Steiner House: www.anth.org.uk/rsh

Rudolf Steiner Archive: www.rsarchive.org

Anthroposophy.net: www.anthroposophy.net

Skylark books: www.skylarkbooks.co.uk

Floris Books: www.florisbooks.co.uk

Rudolf Steiner Press: www.rudolfsteinerpress.com

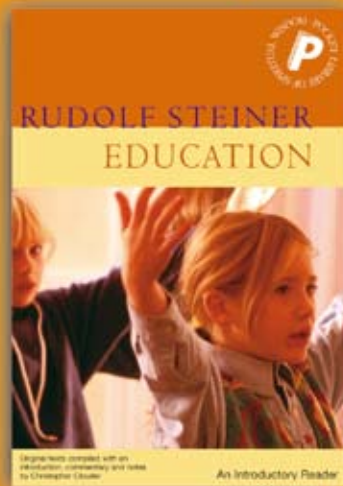


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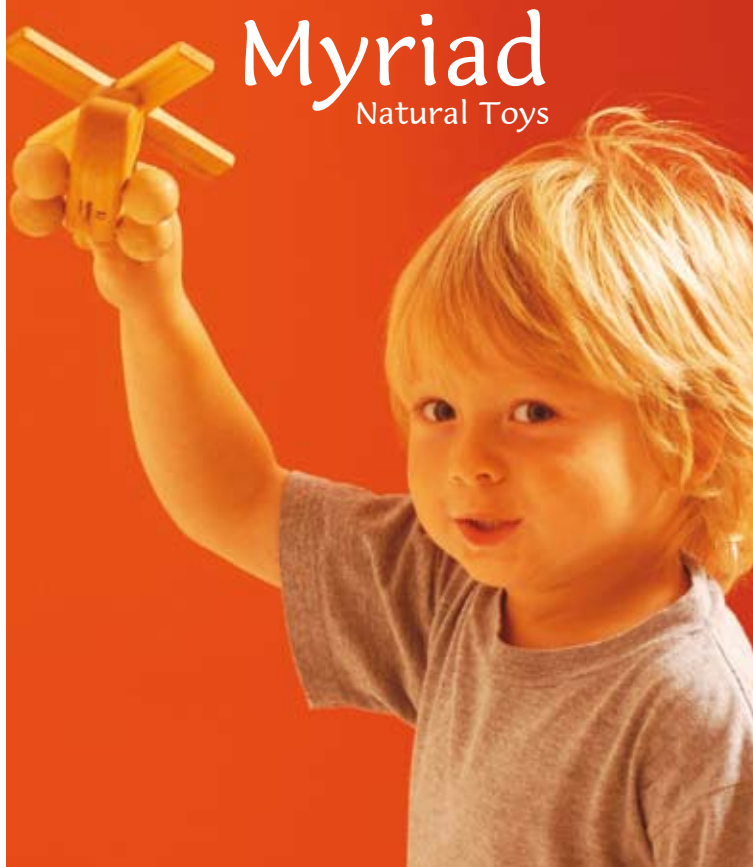
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