



The St Michael Steiner School

NEWSLETTER

11th February 2011
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Dates for Your Diary

FEBRUARY

- Sat 12 Parents' workday (TBC)
- Thur 17 School ends for half term
- Fri 18 Staff INSET (No school)
- Mon 28 Back to school

MARCH

- Sat 12 Association AGM

APRIL

- Fri 1 TERM ENDS 12.30pm for all classes

MAY

- Tue 3 BACK TO SCHOOL (NB Change of date)**
- Wed 11 Class 1 Parents' meeting 7 - 8.30pm
- Thur 12 Kindergartens' Parents' meeting 7 - 8.30pm
- Sat 14 Parents' workday (TBC)
- Thur 19 Class 2&3 Parents' meeting 7 - 8.30pm
- Sat 21 'A Morning in the Classroom': a workshop for parents 9.30 - 12.30
- Fri 27 School ends for half term (NB Change of date - No INSET)**

SCHOOL FINANCE

The school aims, as part of its ethos, to enable as many people as possible to send their children to us, regardless of financial means. It costs over £300,000 per year to run the school as it is, and with expansion plans at both ends, it will cost more next year and so, inevitably, what we ask for from you will increase. We are aware that school fees put a great strain on some people's finances and it is very difficult and painful when we lose children and families because they can no longer bear that strain. Everyone benefits from the diversity in our school community and all of us are left poorer when anyone has to leave. For this reason, we are very happy to offer bursaries and discounts whenever we can. Next year, we are allocating 10% of our income to bursaries, plus whatever is donated to the Bursary fund. You will find, on your invoice, an opportunity to give something to support our bursary fund. We hope that those of you who are able to will give generously.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the two parents who are currently funding our Eurythmy Therapy and the travel costs of one of our Eurythmy teachers, who comes from Devon every week. If anyone would like to know of other projects that need funding in the school, please contact Andrea.

BURSARY APPLICATIONS FOR 2011/2012

For those of you who would like to apply for a bursary for the academic year 2011/2012, Bursary Application packs are now available from Andrea at reception. **Applications must be received by 10th March**

SIBLING DISCOUNTS

Sibling discounts are available on request at the following rates: 10% reduction in fees for the second child and 25% for the third child and subsequent children in each family. **Applications must be received by 1st April.** Sibling discounts, unlike bursaries, are not means tested.

SCHOOL FEES FOR 2011/2012

Kindergarten £4800 p.a.
Classes 1 - 4 £5600 p.a.
Classes 5 - 8 £6400 p.a.

From The Early Years

We recently celebrated Candlemas in the Kindergarten and made our own candles by dipping cord into molten beeswax. "Where do you get that from?" one child asked, whilst he stared curiously into the dark, pungent wax. He was satisfied by the answer from another child: "it smells like bees!" As we slowly walked around dipping the cord into the wax in turn, and much to the amazement of many children, our candles steadily grew in width and length. We enjoyed singing our first spring songs, and added in some songs about bees! Later, with methodical movement we sawed up the last of a Christmas tree and have begun sanding the pieces into smooth candleholders for our new candles. The girls, and the boys in particular, flocked to the woodwork bench and enjoyed testing their strength and perseverance in sawing through the pine branches. The rhythmic work of sawing, sanding, and candle dipping all support the strengthening of the child's etheric or life body.

At the Steiner Waldorf Early Years Group national conference in November 2010, Amanda Bell (Class 4/5 teacher) spoke about the importance of strengthening the child's etheric body, whilst talking about 'Class One readiness'. Rudolf Steiner speaks about the four-fold human being, the physical, etheric, astral and ego bodies, which all are 'born' within the first 21 years of a human being's life (see diagram below).* We can think of the etheric or life body as a mantle around the child that protects it whilst so much physical development growth is occurring in the first seven years of life. Inner organs and a healthy digestive system are being built, and the foundations of all the child's future development are established. The etheric body is strengthened through the Kindergarten's 3 'R's: daily *rhythms* and *routines* and the *repetition* of stories, songs and words.

Amanda also spoke about the differences between boys and girls, in particular how physically active many boys are, and in contrast, how some girls may look more like what we think of as 'school children', happy to sit quietly. However, this appearance of maturity of some girls may belie vulnerability, and their etheric body has not had time to build a strong enough foundation to hold back the early development of more precocious 'adult' behaviour that marks the awakening of the astral body. Of course, not all girls nor all boys fall into these patterns.

When children say things in kindergarten are 'boring', they are feeling the strengthening of the etheric body, and the astral body's reaction against it. The natural birth of the astral body occurs during lower school years and children with strong etheric bodies will be better able to cope with this. At home, to support the health of the growing child we can maintain quiet rhythms and routines, offer limited choices, not too many 'surprises', and a good sleep each night.

Child's birth	approx 7 year
approx 14 years	approx 21 years

Birth of: physical body	etheric body	astral
body	ego	

Amanda spoke about how it is not so much about how we prepare the children for Class 1, but more how the teacher prepares herself for the children. For more information about this stage of development, do look at the Early Years contribution to our School Newsletter in February 2010, available on our website. There, a list of articles available from "You're Not the Boss of Me" was listed, and these are still available from us.

* See *'The Incarnating Child'* by Joan Salter (1987) Hawthorn Press for a deeper description of these stages of development.

Birth To Three development

Joy, Leigha and Katie recently attended the first of a three-day course at Steiner House on working with children from birth to three years. Led by Dot Male, who recently spoke at our school to participants of our Parent & Child group, and Judith Naisar from Austria, we learnt about the work of Emmi Pikler in Hungary during the last century and her work of 'Respectful Care' with young orphans. The closeness of Pike's work to that of Rudolf Steiner was summed up by Freye Jafke, a renowned author and Waldorf kindergarten teacher who is quoted as saying: "*Rudolf Steiner gives us the understanding of the young child, Emmi Pikler shows us how to do it*". Michaela Glockler, Head of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum, international centre for the work of Rudolf Steiner, has said: "*The principles employed at Loczy are in alignment with Rudolf Steiner's recommendations that our goal is not to fix children but to remove hindrances to their development*". We are looking forward to the next two sessions (see information elsewhere in Newsletter), and are considering making a year long commitment to enrol in the Level 1 Pikler Training from October 2011 that will be held in York over several weekends.

Katie, for the early years team

Exemplary Care for the Young Child

Two further one-day introductory workshops With Dot Male and Judith Naisar *How Steiner Early Childhood Care and the Pikler approach can come together*. The next dates are March 26th and May 28th, at Steiner House in London. Further details and booking forms are available at reception, or contact dot@bowring-male.net

What's Happening in the Classrooms?

Class 4 & 5 spent the first four weeks of term in the Ancient world, comparing creation stories, myths and legends from India, Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Through recitation from the Rig Veda and The Book of the Dead, they were able to experience something of the dream-like consciousness of ancient times. We talked about how the true history of these peoples is bound up in the stories they told and retold through the ages, and how many secrets are hidden and can be found in the symbolic pictures and hieroglyphs. The Egyptians were wonderful mathematicians and architects - scholars and builders even came from Greece to learn from them. We were left with an impression of these ancient civilisations as wise, imaginative and creative, beyond anything we can find in the world today.

During this block, we had a visitor to the class, Cathy Brick, a student teacher from the London Waldorf Teacher Training Seminar. Cathy observed and then taught the class about 'Horus Fractions'. The story goes that Horus' left eye was torn out by Set and ripped into 6 pieces, which were thrown in all directions. When Thoth collected them all, he reunited them with his magic powers. Each one of the six pieces thereafter represented a certain fraction, each being worth half of the preceding one. Quickly we realised that you can go on dividing something in half forever and there will still always be a part left over. The Egyptians knew this, of course, and they called the part that is left over, 'The Magic Power of Thoth' that unites all the other parts.

Amanda Bell

Class 6 & 7 recently journeyed through an exciting time in history when the world was opening up for people living in Europe. Marco Polo followed his father and uncle to the Far East and the court of the Great Khan, Kublai. The account of his travels spread throughout Europe and inspired a lively trading route. Following the Hundred Years War, the remarkable heroine, Joan of Arc, and the invention of the printing press, attention was given to a new impulse in Portugal to explore a seaward route to India. Prince Henry the Navigator set up a school to teach navigation, map-making, and sailing with voyages setting out along the coast of Africa searching for a way around it. Just after Christopher Columbus left the security of the coastline and ventured across the Sea of Darkness to what he thought was India, Vasco de Gama finally succeeded in rounding the Cape of Good Hope and then on to India.

In the last couple of weeks, Class 6 & 7 have been learning about the human body in their physiology main lesson. First, we talked about what we eat and what happens to our food as it makes its way through the digestive system. Then, the respiratory and circulatory systems were taken up, as we learned about breathing, blood, and the wisdom of the heart. Next week, the nerves and senses will be studied.

We have also begun to work on our class play, The Lark, about the life of Joan of Arc. Performance details to follow soon!

Brian Jacques

A Refreshing Reminder

Earlier this term, Dot Male gave a talk for parents from our kindergarten and our Parent & Child group. Natalie Meddings wrote down her thoughts afterwards ...

There was so very much that I didn't understand when I had my first baby. I went at motherhood like a job – assuming that since her creation had been largely down to me, I was pretty much responsible for her completion too. She was that 'empty vessel' we all know of now. I, the jug - and back then at the start, I was poised for a lot of pouring.

I took no pause, did next to no tuning-in during those first days and weeks with her in my arms. And then thanks be to God, she must have cottoned on. Her unbowable spirit, her mysterious rhythms, her powerful cry, her startling *her-ness* – all of it left me no choice. I had to stop 'doing to' my daughter, and start 'being with' her instead. Over that crucial first year, and for many more after, she taught me and is still - to uncurl my too-tight grip and see what she has in store for me.

This month, Waldorf Birth to Three Specialist Dot Male came to visit us and in one succinct and wonderful hour brought all these thoughts and discoveries back to me afresh. Helped by the fact that we were sat in the same room, her words helped me remember my first ever parent-child session when Constance was one - the sense of space I found there, the quiet calm, the let's-see-what-happens play. And how good it felt. Like it was the truth.

She didn't lecture us on the need to respect the unfolding child; or instruct us to acknowledge their own uniquely-minted will; or preach the importance of proper two-way, parent-child relationship. 'None of us knows the answers, we're all unsure as parents - I know I was,' she said. 'But what I do remember feeling sure about was how much Steiner's thinking just made sense.'

Natalie Meddings

We are delighted that Dot will be visiting our school again during the summer term to lead a series of Parent & Baby group sessions. More information will be available soon.

SCHOOL NEWS

IMPORTANT: CHANGE OF SUMMER TERM START DATE

&

ACCOMMODATION NEEDED FOR EASTER TEACHERS' CONFERENCE

The announcement of a bank holiday for Prince William's wedding on Friday 29th April left us with the prospect of returning to school after Easter Monday, having 3 days of school and then 4 more days holiday, because of the May day bank holiday on 2nd May. This didn't seem like a very good way to start the term, so we have decided to extend the Easter break and return to school on Tuesday 3rd May.

We will not, however, be resting during the last week of April as the school is hosting the SWSF Easter Teachers' Conference at Rudolf Steiner House from 26th to 28th April. Some of the conference participants will need accommodation for the nights of 26th and 27th. If you are able to offer a bed, with or without breakfast, please let us know. Your guest will pay £20 per night. Email amandabell@mac.com with subject 'conference accommodation'

Thank you very much to those of you who have already responded.

Amanda Bell

The Management Team meets approximately every two weeks to monitor and co-ordinate the School Support Teams. If Support Team members have items for our meetings, please put them in the box in reception or email them to Jin Yee Lim at j.lim@liminaires.co.uk

FREE SCHOOLS AND PREMISES UPDATE

Last summer, we registered with the Department of Education to start to process towards becoming a Free School. The application does not commit us to anything but will allow us to find out what it would mean, how it would work and whether or not it is the right direction for our school.

At that time, we met with two representatives of the department to talk about our premises needs and how to move forward. It was very encouraging, but after that initial contact, everything went quiet - as it did for most applicants - while the department honed, clarified and changed the scheme. Now we have been contacted again with the news that they will contact us about our application before the end of February. We wait with bated breath!

Meanwhile, the search for new premises for the school continues and the Premises Team is meeting on Monday 14th February so that the College can update them on our current position and immediate, as well as longer term, needs.

If you see any empty or available buildings, let Katie or me know. We will pass the information on to Lara Newman, our contact at 'Partnership for Schools', and she will investigate for us.

Amanda Bell, for the College

Cello Lessons

I would like to offer cello lessons after school either individually or in groups of two.

Please do contact me on danielggdavies@gmail.com if you have a child who may be interested.

Daniel Davies

ACCOMMODATION FOR VISITORS

Occasionally we have students, advisors, therapists or speakers, who do not live in London, come to our school. Often we need to find a place for them to stay for the night so that they can join us for our early starts. If you have a room available and are happy to have lodgers there from time to time for mostly one night at a time, and with plenty of notice, please let us know.

Education News Clippings

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship office sends out regular media clippings about education issues to anyone who is interested. Some of them are controversial and not all of them are complimentary about Steiner education, but we're all grown up aren't we? So if you are interested and not scared of a little criticism, email Jasmin at forjasmin@googlemail.com and she will forward them to you.

Newsletter Contributions

The next newsletter will be distributed on Friday 11th March. Deadline for contributions is 6pm Wednesday 9th March.

We are always keen to publish contributions from parents in the newsletter. If you have something interesting/funny/controversial/moving/profound to share, however small, please send it to me. Email please, to: amandabell@mac.com

Outstanding Fees - please pay now!

Fee invoices may be paid either:

- 1 Annually in advance by September 10th or:
- 2 Termly by the first day of each term or:
- 3 By regular monthly Standing Order commencing in September with financial commitment to be met in full not later than the following 30th June (NB *This date is a correction to the one previously published*).

Cheques should be made payable to:
The St Michael Steiner School Ltd.

Information for BACS payments:

Account name:
THE ST MICHAEL STEINER SCHOOL LTD.
Account number: 65098413
Bank: THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK
Sort code: 08-92-99

Please quote your family name as a reference so that we can identify your payment.

Would you like to see this newsletter in colour and detail?

This Newsletter - as well as back issues - is available in full colour on our website at

www.stmichaelsteiner.wandsworth.sch.uk

Community Section

Please note that the school does not endorse or recommend, either in general or in particular, anything offered in the Community Pages and parents are advised to check the qualifications of practitioners or people offering services here.

35 Acres of beautiful Devon all to yourself!

Secluded field for private camping or activity groups, with woods and stream available £1000 per week. Near to Blackingstone Rock. 4 miles from Moretonhampstead.

Email j_boulty@hotmail.com
or tel. 01626 824979