



The St Michael Steiner School NEWSLETTER

2nd March 2012

5 Merton Road London SW18 5ST

Tel: 020 8870 0500

Email: info@stmichaelsteinerschool.co.uk

Website: www.stmichaelsteiner.wandsworth.sch.uk

Dates for Your Diary

MARCH

Sat 3: 10am - 12:30pm - Open Day

Sat 10: 10am - 12:30pm AGM (all parents are invited)

Fri 23: 9:15 - 11:45am - Simplicity Parenting Workshop Course 3

Fri 23: 1:30 - 3:30pm - A Gentle Beginning (Parent and Infant Support group)

Thu 29: 11 - 12.30pm - End of Term Festival - TBC (No Afternoon Care)

Fri 30: 8.15 / 8.30am - Kindergarten Family Festival

Fri 30: 12.30pm - END OF TERM

APRIL

Mon 23: 10am - 4pm - STAFF INSET (no school)

Tue 24: 8.15am - TERM STARTS

Fri 27: 9:15 - 11:45am - Simplicity Parenting Workshop Course 4

Fri 27: 1:30 - 3:30pm - A Gentle Beginning (Parent and Infant Support group)

MAY

Mon 7 - May Day Bank Holiday (no school)

Sat 12 - 10am - 12.30pm Open Day

Wed 16 - 7 - 8.30pm - Class 1 and Class 2 Parents evenings

Thu 17 - 7 - 8.30pm - Kindergarten Parents Evening

Fri 25 - 9:15 - 11:45am - Simplicity Parenting Workshop Course 5

What is the task of Education?

Over 100 years ago, the German philosopher and educationist Herbart (1776 - 1841) said that he could not imagine any instruction that was not at the same time education, and vice versa, he could not imagine any education that could dispense with instruction. Today, the majority of teachers in schools of all kinds would fundamentally agree with such a conception. On the other hand, in actual practice in the classroom, a great deal of the teaching given to children of all ages is mere instruction and has little or no relation to their moral nature or to the development of character. These deeper aspects of education are too often left to what is sometimes vaguely called the "school atmosphere", though many boys and girls owe a great deal to the fine influence of one or other individual teacher who, through his or her personality, has brought real moral strength into their lives.

The same problem is discussed by Lord Elton in his book *St George and the Holy Grail* (1942) in which he insists that all imparting of knowledge should have a religious, moral quality. He also points out that, at the time he is writing, there is one country of Europe where there is certainly no divorce between education and instruction: "The Nazi school is not a school which devotes an hour a week to teaching a certain creed, but a school which teaches everything in a certain way." It is a strange thing that a fine ideal can be so degraded by a wrongful application, and it is one of the ironies of life that this can so easily happen. If teachers throughout the world today could and would bring the great human and moral values into the classroom through the actual material of their lessons with anything like the force and thoroughness with which the Nazi teachers inculcated inhuman and immoral values into the German children of that generation, then they would be well on the road towards achieving such an educational ideal as that outlined by Herbart.

The reason for our failure to do this is very largely due to the great emphasis laid today on an intellectual form of teaching. The training of the child's intellect is considered of paramount importance; this is partly the result of the pressure of examinations at various ages, but also of the modern view of child psychology which tends to look upon children as little grown-ups, with the same kind of faculties as the adult, though less developed. Every human being expresses himself in life through the three faculties of Thinking, Feeling and Will. In the being of the child, these are simply not there in the same way as in the adult man or woman. For example, the thinking of a child of 10 or 11 years of age is intimately bound up with the life of feeling.

It is a feeling-thinking and not yet a logical, intellectual thinking. The soul expression of children of this age is fundamentally in the realm

of feeling and imagination and education at this time must go with this and not try to call forth powers that are not yet properly awake.

In a letter to a friend in 1817, Keats wrote: "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination. What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream - he awoke and found it Truth." This is the inner experience of a young child, and, as a poet, Keats carried this wonderful power of the Imagination into adult life. Today, our modern intellectual education provides little food for the imagination, and so this most precious gift of childhood tends to wither and die instead of growing and developing into one of the noblest expressions of the human soul. The really great people of all ages have been people of imagination. The great and noble deeds of history are the outcome of the vision of such people and have often had the most far-reaching effects on the lives of men and women the world over. Just to take one example, Sir Winston Churchill, combining imaginative vision with indomitable will, more than any other single man, saved the countries of Europe from subjugation by a ruthless tyranny. It is worth noting that, according to his own confession, he was a dull scholar at Harrow, judging by ordinary intellectual standards. Perhaps it was just because he unconsciously warded off the deadening effects of over-intellectualism during his early school years that he was able to preserve into later life a great power of imagination and immense forces of will.

Just as there is the right moment for a little child to stand upright and take her first unsteady steps, so there is a right time for her to begin to learn the three R's, to hear about the history of the Romans for the first time, to be introduced to the world of scientific phenomena in physics and chemistry. The modern tendency is to hurry everything on and to teach children subjects, or different aspects of subjects, too early, before their inner development is mature enough for them to really grasp what they are being taught. This often has the effect of forcing the intellectual development prematurely, and this, of course, can be done, but only at the expense of the other faculties, which thereby become enfeebled - for example, the imagination. No sane mother would ever encourage her small child to walk before she saw that he was ready for this great adventure; she knows that if she did, the result would be disastrous and probably lead to deformity for life. In the sphere of the soul, the effect of bringing intellectual teaching too early to children is crippling to their full human capabilities and may even lead to infirmities in later years. Many parents today are proud of the fact that their boy or girl can read, write and do simple sums at the age of four or five. How much better it would be for the future development of their child if they were proud of the fact that he could not do any of these things at this age in spite of the efforts of his teachers!

From the introduction to "Geometry and the Imagination" by A. Renwick Sheen



From The Early Years

Our “Big Children’s Group” began in January for one morning every week, comprising seventeen of our oldest kindergarten children. The children have set to work on their new projects with huge amounts of enthusiasm and excitement.

The children chose a skein of wool which they then had to wind into a ball, and then learn the task of finger knitting, ultimately to make their hobby horse bridle. For some this was easy, but for others a real challenge. The children were delighted and amazed with the height of the sturdy hazel sticks kindly donated for their hobby horses. Using vegetable peelers, the outer bark was gradually peeled off the stick, then after sawing them to size they will be sanded smooth over the next few weeks. We are waiting for wool to arrive, ready to be washed, carded and stuffed into woollen socks, and we will make felt for their horses’ ears.



Alongside this work, the children are getting together socially as a group, eating and playing together.

The changes that young children are going through at this age has been likened to that of a ‘caterpillar spinning a cocoon and emerging as quite a new creature, a butterfly. The child does not simply experience a linear growth cycle happening on a continuum, but, rather, the child goes through a transformation on many different levels.¹

We endeavor to support the changes each child faces with kindness and a loving authority, gently and sometimes firmly guiding the children as they grow physically and emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Rudolf Steiner speaks of

children at this age as needing ‘soul milk’ from us. As teachers, we have seen the children grow and change over three years in kindergarten, and so we grow and transform with them. Being the purveyors of ‘soul milk’ can offer us, as adults around our children, a path of development for ourselves.



We would like to welcome Megan and her family into Rebecca’s kindergarten.

Please note, our next Kindergarten Parents Evening is on Thursday 15th March, 7pm - 8.30pm.

*Katie Sharrock
for the Early Years team,*

photos: Jeannette Cubaquerey & Katie Sharrock

¹ “You’re not the Boss of Me” ed Ruth Kerr, 2007

What's happening in the Classrooms?

Next week, **Class 5&6** will be going to Nîmes in the south of France for three days. A more usual destination for a Class 6 trip in the UK is Hadrian's Wall, the most northern point of the Roman empire. However, the Roman sites in this country have a very different feeling from those in France, mainly because Britain is an island and the Romans who settled here didn't have much contact with the rest of the empire. Stepping shakily off a boat after crossing the stormy English Channel, did not have the same effect for a would-be mighty conqueror as sweeping majestically over the hilltop with your army behind you, so, understandably, they were reluctant to come here once the country had submitted to their rule. As a result, the soldiers posted in Britain became more 'anglicised' than they did in mainland Europe, and what they left behind tells us more about Britain than it does about Rome.

'The Romans in Britain' is an interesting subject in itself, but at this point in our journey through history, I want the children to understand how incredibly powerful the Roman empire was; how it spread across Europe like a steamroller, wiping out the old ways of life and replicating itself - building little Romes - everywhere. This didn't happen in Britain, which returned very much to its old, pre-Roman ways after the fall of the empire, but it did in France, and Nîmes is one of the best preserved Roman cities in Europe.

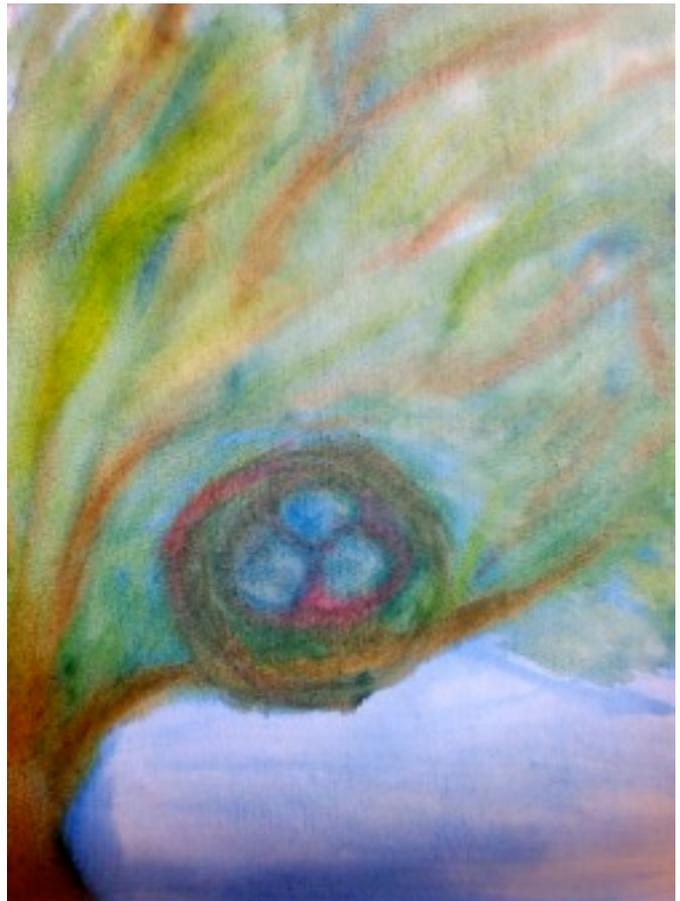
The Arena and the Maison Carrée, both in the centre of the city, have been in continuous use since they were built over 2000 years ago, and this means that they don't feel like museums but like the working buildings they are.

The Pont du Gard is the most amazing piece of engineering. An aqueduct built to bring water from the river Gard to Nîmes (Nemausus), its stones held together for 2000 years without being cemented. When you stand on it, you feel the Romans' understanding of the laws of physics; that their grasp of everything to do with the material world was awe-inspiring; that they could have achieved anything they set their minds to in this field. More than anything else, it is a monument to their incredible will.

Amanda Bell

Class 7&8 concluded their main lesson on Chemistry before the half-term by learning about starch and sugars, carbohydrates, proteins, fats and oils. Now we have begun a block on English by reading through the play we intend to put together for the end of June. We have also been reading Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and becoming more conscious of what a summary needs to include, how to tease out what is important, rather than re-telling the story.

Brian Jacques



On Saturday the **24th of March @ 7.30pm**, there is the premiere of Goethe's very famous and special fairytale; "*The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*" at Steiner House Theatre. This will be performed by London Eurhythmy Stage Group of which I am a member.

Steiner said of this work : " it is an extraordinary piece of work and one should not just read it, one should experience it!".

Michele Hunter

Study Group

The study group with Philip Martyn is now going strong, every Wednesday morning from about 8:40. Speak to Andrea if you would like to join.

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

I'm sorry that there was no newsletter in February. To make up for it, this one is a week early. The next newsletter will be distributed on Friday 23rd March. Deadline for contributions is 6pm Wednesday 21st 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

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.

HANDMADE NATURAL SOAP AVAILABLE

Lavender
Rose Geranium
Clary Sage and Lemongrass
Orange Geranium
Price: £3 each or two for £5.
Please contact Brian Jacques
(Class 7&8 teacher) 07759917112

Dear parents,
should you be interested in:
- French tutoring (children and adults)
- babysitting
then I am the person you are looking for!
Please feel free to email me for details.
leroumilie@yahoo.fr
Mlle Leroux.

Monday afternoon childcare wanted

I'm looking for someone to collect Max (kindy) and Emily (Class 2) from school, walk or cycle them home, feed them and be with them, guiding their play until 5pm every Monday during term time, starting as soon as possible. If you are available to look after them during the holidays too, that's an advantage. Please contact Camilla 07990 525 589 or camilla@rudehealth.com

For Rent: Family home in Southfields/Wandsworth

Dear all, I am the mother of two children in the lower school. We currently live in a wonderful family home (described below) only 1-minute walk from the Community Centre Kindergarten and about 15-20 minutes walk from the main school site. I am in need to move and am looking for a family/group of sharers to take over my current tenancy agreement. If you are looking for a good place to live have a look at this opportunity. The rent is low priced for the size and location of the property and the landlord is easy and professional.

Terraced semi-detached House(with side entrance to front and back gardens), 3 ample double bedrooms with small inbuilt wardrobes. Good size eat-in, in-built kitchen (plenty of storage) with loads of sun light flooding in. Kitchen is semi-open to an ample living room. French doors facing a good size back garden. Family bathroom upstairs. Good size downstairs toilet
Front garden with space for bench, table/bikes etc - lots of sun light! Ample entrance hall-way with plenty of space for shoes storage/furniture/hooks. Props: Big walk-in under-stairs cupboard, back garden shed (and compost bin), front porch with storage, very big loft storage (recently floor-boarded), big airing cabinet, carpeted throughout, off street parking, safe pathway in front of the house (excellent for young children to cycle) Combi-boiler GCH Cooker, fridge & freezer (with space for a family size dishwasher) Available unfurnished £1425 PCM

This is a safe area/neighbourhood, we live here nearly four years and will miss this house dearly! If interested, please contact Raquel Pinto on 07973535523
email: raquel.souza.pinto@gmail.com

Community Section

Let Your Heart Sing!

Nick and Susie Prater Singing Workshop



Sunday 13th May

11 am to 4 pm

- Come and sing with us in the beautiful Victorian Normansfield Theatre (www.langdondowncentre.org.uk off Kingston Rd, Teddington, TW11 9PS)
- Uplifting, soulful harmonies, simple, powerful songs of freedom, joy and peace, gospels and spirituals from around the world. Nick's wonderful compositions and arrangements will fill you with joy!
- All Welcome! Everything taught by ear. No need to read music just to enjoy singing together. Bring and share lunch. Refreshments provided.

Advance booking essential: £25 before April 20th, £30 thereafter. Contact **Pepita Payan 0208 943 4762**, joeandpep@talktalk.net or **Lucy Lister 07813 677742**, lalister@hotmail.co.uk
Please send cheques payable to P. Payan with contact details including your email address and telephone number, to 31 Victor Rd, Teddington, TW11 8SP

For more details of Nick and Susie Prater go to www.nickprater.co.uk or www.naturalvoice.net