



The St Michael Steiner School

# NEWSLETTER

11th September 2009

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## Dates for Your Diary

### September

Tue 15th Open day 3.30-5

Wed 16th Class 1&2 Parents' evening 7 - 8.30pm

Wed 23rd Class 7&8 and Kindergarten parents' evening 7 - 8.30pm

Tue 29th Michaelmas

### October

Sat 3rd Education workshop (see article)

Wed 14th Class 3&4 and 5&6 parents' evening 7 - 8.30pm

Sat 17th Association meeting 10am - 12.30pm

Fri 23rd School ends for half term.

Mon 26th - Fri 30th Half Term

### November

Mon 2nd INSET (No school)

Tues 3rd Back to school

Fri 13th Martinmas festival

Sat 14th Open day 10-12.30pm

Mon 30th Advent festival

Michaelmas September 29th

THOU Michael the victorious,  
I make my circuit under thy shield,  
Thou Michael of the white steed,  
And of the bright brilliant blades,  
Conqueror of the dragon,  
Be thou at my back,  
Thou ranger of the heavens,  
Thou warrior of the King of all,  
O Michael the victorious,  
My pride and my guide,  
O Michael the victorious,  
The glory of mine eye.

From Carmina Gadelica Vol. 1: 2 Seasons: Michaelmas



## **COMMON MYTHS ABOUT WALDORF EDUCATION: READING**

### **Is it true that children in Steiner Waldorf schools are not taught to read until second grade?**

No! Learning to read is an entire process with many contributory facets, and Waldorf Education undertakes reading instruction in almost the opposite way that it is introduced in most schools across the nation. Indeed, the foundation for reading instruction is laid already in the kindergarten.

In the United States, the mainstream approach to reading has been to introduce decoding skills as the first step in the reading process. This entails memorizing the alphabet and its corresponding sounds through repetitive drills and then linking these sounds together to read simple words and sentences. This is the approach that is built into early readers. You probably remember: "See Dick run. Run, Dick, run. Run, run, run.", or some similar type of reading material when you were in school. Because the content of these early readers must be very simple to restrict words to those that can be easily sounded out, teachers are forced to wait until the middle and upper elementary years to work on more sophisticated texts. Then teachers must work hard to improve comprehension since the pupils at this age have already moved beyond the phase of where imaginative thinking is at its peak.

There is a second concern about teaching reading skills in this sequence. This approach is difficult for many young children because, in many cases, their eye muscles have not matured to the point where they can track properly on a page. Thus, a number of children will be labeled as slow or remedial readers simply because their eyes may not have matured as early as other children.

Waldorf Education approaches reading instruction from an almost opposite direction specifically so that instruction is synchronous with the development of children. Reading is much more than recognizing sound/symbol relationships. For true reading to occur, there must be a corresponding inner activity that takes place as the child decodes words: that is, the child must form an inner picture of what he or she is reading so that comprehension develops. The rich life of the imagination is most potent in a child during kindergarten and early elementary years and is present at the same time that the child's sense for the sound and rhythm of language is at its peak.

To capture these capacities at the time that they are most present in the child is the rationale for a foundation of reading that begins first with spoken language. The rich language of fairy tales, the pictorial imagery of songs and poems and the desire of the young child to listen to stories and repeat rhymes and sing songs all become the basis for a language arts curriculum through which a child may come to love "the word". Imagine how much more complex and imaginative are the stories to which a child may be introduced if they are orally presented rather than through the simplistic language of a reader. Imagine how much a child's vocabulary can develop from listening to the content that the teacher brings. Imagine also how much more sophisticated a child's understanding (comprehension) of the world can become through hearing the rich and complex language in the teacher's presentations and stories.

For all of these reasons, Waldorf students will be given a strong foundation in comprehension, vocabulary and in the sounds and meanings of their native tongue. Then students will be introduced to writing and spelling the letters and words that are part of their stories. And, as a final step, the students will read from their own texts describing the stories that they have heard. In this way, students have the proper time to develop all of the skills that are part of the complex skill of reading at the time when it is most appropriate for them to do so. When reading is approached in this way, children become voracious readers who love and understand what they choose to read.

*The 'Common Myths about Waldorf Education' series is published on the AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools of North America) website. Most of the articles are relevant to parents of Steiner pupils in England and we will publish any that we think may be of particular interest to our parent body.*

*You can visit their website at [Why Waldorf Works Books&More](#)*

## **EDUCATION WORKSHOP**

**Steiner Waldorf education is based on a view of the human being and of child development that is fundamentally different from that held in mainstream education. Even when parents have already decided to send their children to a Steiner school, sometimes it is a challenge to understand how we work with the children - when we teach them what, how we do it and why - and to have confidence that it really will give the children what they need.**

**The support of parents is a vital part of this education and we offer our termly education workshops to give you an opportunity to experience what happens in the classrooms and to get the answers to some of your questions.**

**The first of these workshops for this year will be on Saturday 3rd October from 10am to 12.30pm. A choice of workshops will be announced shortly. Please book your places with Lara and have your questions ready.**

## From the Early Years ...

Our first morning of term began by bidding goodbye to our new class 1 children. The archetypal image of the rainbow is especially strong in the consciousness of young children. A rainbow bridge stretching from the heavens to the earth is an imagination brought to our kindergartens during the birthday celebration stories told throughout the year. The star child looks at the rainbow from above before joining their family on Earth symbolising the pre birth period. Now in their seventh year and about to begin a new phase in their lives the children have a different perspective. We watched and sang to them as they purposefully and joyfully walked under the rainbow bridge of ribbons held aloft by their families and younger friends. This stretched from the kindergarten door right along the corridor to the entrance of their new classroom. Here they were greeted by their teacher Edwin Ladaga with a welcoming handshake and went in to join class two.

Welcome our new children **Alicee, Alithea, Alexander, Matthias, and Gustav** and their families

Farewell to **Sana** we wish her well in her new school.

We are pleased to be working alongside the new members of our Early Years Team:

**Rebecca Firth**, our Early Years administrator and Afternoon Care facilitator.

**María Salvo**, our Afternoon Care assistant.

**Daniel Hipkin**, our part time volunteer

We warmly welcome back our kindergarten teacher **Katie Sharrock**.

Thank you to last year's class reps for all your help.

Our class reps for 2009-10 are:

Katie's Kindy: **Camilla Barnard & Crys Mincov**

Leigha's Kindy: **Natalie Meddings, Liz Beugelink & Mihiri Lim**

We look forward to gathering together at our first Parent's Evening later on in September

Leigha Hipkin

### Craft Group

The Social and Outreach Group is pleased to announce that our weekly craft group for parents will meet again every Thursday morning from 09.00am to 12.00 noon at 17 Melrose Road, London SW18 4BB. We are delighted to welcome Rebecca, who has just joined our school from the Greenwich Steiner School and who has kindly agreed to help with the group.

This term we will focus on projects to decorate the communal areas of the school, such as our much-loved harvest chains for the hall windows, and to replace some of the equipment in our kindergartens that was sadly damaged by last year's moth infestation. We also hope to include a couple of cooking workshops. As usual, we will work with a variety of materials and handwork techniques to suit every taste and skill level. The sessions will be led by various members of our community as well as the occasional visitor from outside.

We look forward to welcoming many old and new faces to our mornings of creativity, social gathering and mutual support. Previous experience is not necessary and all materials will be provided on the day. To cover our costs we will ask for a contribution of £1 from each participant.

Please check the Community Notice Boards and next month's newsletter for a detailed schedule of projects.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to Carol for her much valued contribution in coordinating the group over the past few years.

Birgit Möller

## Donors needed

As the effects of the worldwide financial downturn begin to be felt, we are aware that several families in the school are really struggling to pay their school fees. More people than usual applied for bursaries for this year and so the available funds had to be spread more thinly just at a time when people needed them more.

Our aim and intention is to provide this education for anyone who genuinely wants it for their children, and the school fees are set at a level well below those of other private schools to enable this to happen. Unfortunately this is still beyond the reach of many people, but we have no other source of funding at the moment. Apart from the fact that some people are not able even to consider sending their children to our school, it is particularly painful to lose committed and supportive people from our community purely for financial reasons, as has happened recently.

This, then, is an appeal to those of you who aren't feeling the pinch quite so keenly to think about donating to the bursary fund, either in a one-off gift, a regular monthly contribution, however small, or by sponsoring a child for a period of time.

You can donate by cheque, standing order, bank transfer or via our website. Please mark your contributions 'Bursary Fund'.

Thank you.

## Use of Email Addresses

It has come to our attention that parents' email addresses have been used to circulate advertisements and information that is not connected with the school. This contravenes data protection legislation and so we have changed our policy regarding this issue. Email addresses supplied to the school will not be included on the parents' contact list and will be used by the school for school related information only and addresses will be hidden.

If Parent Support teams, Class Reps or parents have something they would like to send out to the whole school, it can be done through the newsletter or, if necessary and appropriate, by sending it to Lara, who will then send it out from the school with addresses hidden.

If you have other parents' email addresses from last year's correspondence, we ask that you bear this in mind and do not use any that have not been given specifically to you by their owners.

## Consent Forms

If you have not done so already, please return your signed consent form to school as soon as possible.

## SCHOOL CDS

CDs of "Songs for Autumn & Winter" and "Songs for Spring & Summer" are now available from Lara at reception. These are collections of songs from the Kindergarten and Lower school, sung by the teachers and parents of the school. All proceeds go to the school. £8 each, £14 for 2, £6 each for 10 or more.

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

This Newsletter - as well as back issues and all future issues - is available in full colour on our website at [www.stmichaelsteiner.wandsworth.sch.uk](http://www.stmichaelsteiner.wandsworth.sch.uk)

## Newsletter Contributions

The next newsletter will be distributed on Friday 9th October. Deadline for contributions is 6pm Wednesday 7th October. Email them please, to: [amandabell@mac.com](mailto:amandabell@mac.com)

# Community Pages

Please note that the school does not endorse or recommend anything offered in the Community Pages

## CONFIDENCE, LOVE AND FREEDOM

AT RUDOLF STEINER HOUSE, PARK RD, LONDON.

This course will take place on three Sundays 10.30 to 3.30. on the 13/9/09, 27/9/09, and 11/10/09

Total cost £190 includes refreshments and light lunches.

Introducing one of the three ages of childhood in each workshop Tessabella will describe how the ways children understand the world change as they grow up; also, how the problems we experience with children arise from their natural learning processes being blocked or interrupted by the way we treat them.

Through this course you will discover that each stage that children make in development clearly shows how they can learn to become confident, socially active and free thinking adults. You will learn ways of noticing the way they think and feel, and how they show how what happens around them had a deep effect on their lives.

## HOW TO LOVE

AT RUDOLF STEINER HOUSE, PARK RD, LONDON.

This course will take place on three Saturdays 10.30 to 3.30. on the 12/9/09, 26/9/09, and 10/10/09

Total cost £190 includes refreshments and light lunches.

Tessabella has been researching and developing ways of learning how to love for more than 14 years. During the three workshops she will teach ways of developing capacities to love unconditionally and unreservedly through practical exercises. Learning how to love actively goes beyond the experience of being drawn to love someone or some thing. It can be felt expanding and flowing from you; and is not demanding or exhausting. This course is life changing.

## HOW TO LOVE

AT HAWKWOOD COLLEGE, PAINSWICK OLD ROAD,STROUD, GLOS.

This residential course from 6pm 29<sup>th</sup> Sep. to 5pm 1<sup>st</sup> of Oct. 2009  
Total cost £295 single room /£255 shared room/ £210 non-residential

## A FINE METHOD OF TEACHING

AT HAWKWOOD COLLEGE, PAINSWICK OLD ROAD,STROUD, GLOS.

This residential course is for teachers of children aged 7 to 18  
6pm 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. to 5pm 29<sup>th</sup> of Oct. 2009

Total cost £295 single room /£255 shared room/ £210 non-residential

The course comes out of research where specific Steiner-Waldorf methods address all the behavioural, learning and social needs of pupils. The focus of the course will be on developing a style of teaching practice to find interest not error. The method acknowledges the developmental stages children go through and natural processes of learning to increase pupils' attention and learning potential, improve behaviour and attitude, and reduce anti-social problems such as bullying.

Dr Tessabella Lovemore travels widely advising in schools and ethically orientated organizations, counselling, running courses and lecturing on Children's development, learning and behaviour, Lifestyle, Technology, Love, Consciousness, Morality, Soul development and ways to Re-enliven the senses.

This conference is open to teachers, staff and parents of children in Steiner schools. Please ask at school for a programme if you are interested in going.

## NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

### MOVING WITH SOUL

How can we support the development of movement in the young child?

With Renate Long-Breipohl

Organised by the Steiner Waldorf Early Years Group

Saturday 17th October 2009

9.30 - 5.15pm

Ringwood Waldorf School  
Folly Farm Lane, Ashley, Ringwood,  
Hampshire,

BH24 2NN Tel: 01425 472664

[www.ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk](http://www.ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk)

## Request

Dear friends,

I am a Dutch journalist writing for the Dutch daily [NRC Handelsblad](http://www.nrc.nl). Also, I am a former Waldorf kid, this year turning 39. Before retirement, my parents used to work as teachers at the Waldorf School in Arnhem, The Netherlands.

My wife and I would like to stay one or two years in the UK, with our daughter (aged 4 months). We both love the UK and go there often for our holidays. I am writing a book on the future of the Dutch society, and therefore I need some distance from it. Besides writing the book, I can do a lot of my work as a journalist from outside The Netherlands.

We would like to ask if you know of any possibility to rent a house in the UK, starting next year. Maybe it is also possible to advertise our request on your schools website, or in your schools magazine. We would be very pleased if you would be able to help us.

We are looking forward hearing from you.  
Thank you in advance,

Kind regards,

Tobias Reijngoud  
Joos Maes

[www.tobiasreijngoud.nl](http://www.tobiasreijngoud.nl)