

The St Michael Steiner School

Early Years Parents Handbook

September 2016 to July 2017

*This handbook, updated annually, provides information specifically about the Early Years.
It should be read in conjunction with the main school Parents Handbook, also updated annually.*

Index

Page number

Section 1: Our Provision

- Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf Education 4
- History of St Michael Steiner School 5
- The early years provision 5
- The Kindergarten 5
- Indoors and Outdoors 6
- Daily and weekly activities 6
- Afternoon and Lunch Clubs 6
- Healthy Eating 7
- The Early Years Foundation Stage 8
- Birthdays and Festivals 9
- Eurythmy 10
- Early years Staff 10
- The role of the Teacher and Assistant 12
- The Wider Community 12

Section 2: Parent Partnerships

- Parents and carers as Partners 14
- Parent evenings, one-to-one, home visits 14
- What do we ask of Parents 15
- Class contacts 16
- Parent Education 16
- Recommended Reading List 16

Section 3: Practical Issues

- How to Apply for a kindergarten place 18
- Finances 18
- What your child will need in kindergarten 19
- Settling in 20
- Toys in kindergarten 20
- Arrival and Departure 20
- Next Steps 21

Section 4: Procedures and policies

- Creative discipline and behaviour 22
- Television and Media 22
- Safeguarding children 23
- SEN early years 24
- Disability discrimination statement 24
- Inclusion 25
- First Aid 25
- Grievance/Complaints procedure 25

Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf Education

In the chaos of Europe after the First World War, many people hoped for and believed in a better future, based on new social forms. One of these was the industrialist, Emil Molt, owner of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart. Molt was a friend of the philosopher and scientist, Rudolf Steiner. Steiner had written books and given lectures on education and now Molt asked him to found a school for the children of the workers in his factory. Rudolf Steiner accepted his proposal on two conditions: that he would be free from every political, economic or religious control in following his educational principles, and that children of every social and economic class would be admitted. The school was to be 'free', he said, as an artist is free to create out of the necessities of his material. Steiner trained twelve teachers based on a study of child development, and 'The Waldorf School' opened in September 1919.

The first Waldorf – or Steiner – school in the English-speaking world opened in south London in 1925. Since then, this innovative form of education has continued to be popular and relevant and there are now around 1000 schools worldwide.

Each of these schools, whilst being independent and part of its local community, shares an educational approach 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 characterized the different stages of development that 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.

"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

In Steiner Waldorf schools, like some other educational philosophies, formal learning does not begin until the children are in their seventh year. Rudolf Steiner asked Elisabeth Grunellius, a trained Froebel teacher, to set up the first kindergarten. He asked Elisabeth to write a report on how we can bring life and domestic activity into the kindergarten in such a way that the intensity and love of action which is expressed in the child's play can re-emerge later in the work and social life of the adult. Elisabeth wrote down her definition of a Waldorf Kindergarten:

- A Waldorf Kindergarten should protect children from too early intellectuality.
- A Waldorf Kindergarten can be anywhere in the world, in its every essence it addresses fundamental humanness.
- A Waldorf Kindergarten rests only on this principle. Everything else is open to the fresh initiative of the teacher.

History of The St Michael Steiner School

Founded in 2001 by a group of teachers in Wandsworth, the school moved in 2012 to its current location, a Grade II Listed Georgian country house set within approximately 3 1/2 acres (1.2 hectares)

of private grounds in the Hanworth Park Conservation Area. The property was originally built in 1812 as a Rectory and has since been adapted and extended over the years. Both the house and grounds retain great charm.

The school caters for children from birth to eighteen years of age. The three founder teachers continue to work alongside a strong team of over twenty-eight specialist teachers and support staff, many who have been involved with the school since its early days.

The Early Years Provision

Early childhood groups are provided as follows:

- Two Kindergartens, age 3 to 6 years: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 12.30pm
- Lunch Club: Monday to Thursday 12.30pm to 1.30pm
- Afternoon Club: Monday to Thursday 12.30pm to 3.00pm

Parent and child groups: Parents and careers with children from birth to three years:

- Morning groups: Monday 9am- 11am; Thursday and Friday, 10am - 12 noon
- Afternoons: Wednesday 1.30pm - 3pm
- Parent and Baby group: Fridays 1.30pm to 2.45pm
- Outdoor Woodland Garden session, from birth - seven years, Thursday 1.30 - 3pm

Please book your sessions in advance on a half-termly basis.

The Kindergarten, children age between three to six years

The real work of young children is creative free play, through which their will forces are strengthened while, at the same time, they learn to become social beings and integrate into a group. Plenty of time is provided for un-structured, child-initiated play, both indoors and outside in the garden. This time is held within the clear daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms, giving the young child a sense of belonging and security and allowing each child to develop at his or her own pace. Alongside the play, healthy snacks are prepared and eaten with the children, and daily seasonal songs and stories give the children experience and enjoyment of language, as well as the opportunity to develop social awareness. Repetition and routines are used as a foundation for healthy imitation, the child's natural impulse for learning.

Toys are of natural materials and are 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. These activities are also the foundation of practical, experimental maths and science, language acquisition and all areas of learning.

Adult-initiated activities including handwork, sewing, simple woodwork and beeswax modeling are available to enable the children to experiment with and express their own creativity. Care is taken of both the indoor and outdoor physical environment with activities such as mending, cleaning and gardening. Many activities are taken outdoors to do or complete, creating a bridge between the two environments.

Indoors and outdoors: free-flow play

Children from both kindergartens play together outside every day whatever the weather and often enjoy ring-times and picnics outdoors too. The garden has wide grassy spaces, a mud kitchen, a

sandpit, climbing structures, logs and planks for den-making, beds for growing vegetables and flowers, a fire-pit log circle, plus a gazebo for story-telling and sheltered play. Rainwater is harvested from the Cottage roof in big barrels, enabling children to water the growing garden and make mud pies. The weekly soup is cooked over an open fire whilst children sit on logs or help gather firewood. Children are also able to visit the large Woodland garden on the other side of the main school building which includes sand pits, swings, climbing tree, fire pit and vegetable beds.

The school benefits from direct access to the wide open spaces of Hanworth Park and playground areas. Once children are settled after the beginning of term, we take daily hikes around the park, visiting the River Longford and observing the landscape changing through the seasons.

Children help care for two guinea pigs, Silky and Caramel, who live in the garden during the week and visit different families during weekends and holidays.

Daily and Weekly activities

Children are free to participate in both domestic and artistic activities every day, often assisting adults in their work. Domestic activities include snack preparation, washing up, gardening, cleaning, mending, ironing and caring for our kindergarten environment. Artistic activities include painting, crafts, drawing and modeling (with beeswax or dough).

Paintings may be for a forthcoming festival, and baking is varied: bread, chapattis, pizza, biscuits, etc. Most crafts are seasonal and often enhance festival celebrations. Whilst specific items are made, children are also free to use materials in their own imaginative way and a craft area is always accessible in the kindergarten with paper, scissors, glue, and other materials. Through imitation of the adult 'crafters', children have the opportunity to acquire new skills including finger knitting, sewing, woodwork, modelling, or can make special objects for festivals, for example lanterns for the autumn Martinmas walk.

The usual daily rhythm:

- 8.30/8.45: arrival
- Outside and/or indoor creative free play, including snack preparation and artistic activities
- Tidy up
- Ring time or on Wednesday - Eurythmy
- Snack time
- Outdoor creative free play, washing and drying up
- Story time / puppet show
- 12.30pm: home time

This routine provide longer 'breathing-out' times of free play, and a shorter 'breathing-in' of adult-led times of songs, story and snack time. This is a healthy rhythm for the growing child and helps the child become more confident within the familiarity of the daily routine. This is also the basis of creative discipline.

Afternoon Club and Lunch Club (Monday to Thursday)

This is available for children who are settled and able to manage a full day, or those whose parents are working and unable to collect their children by 12.30pm. There are two options:

- a) Lunch Club: 12.30-1.30: a freshly cooked vegetarian lunch is provided. Children must be picked up by 1.30pm.

- b) Afternoon Club: 12.30-3.00. After lunch, the children make 'beds' for a quiet rest, a story and lyre playing, while some children sleep. Following the rest, children have access to indoor and outdoor play. Children must be collected by 3:00pm.

Sessions must be booked per term and will be invoiced termly. Daily fees are £6.00 for Lunch Club and £17.00 for Afternoon Club (including lunch).

Healthy Eating

Children are offered a healthy, organic (wherever possible) mid-morning snack, with the focus on a different grain for each weekday. The weekly vegetarian menu is inspired by the principles of biodynamic farming. This is not spoken to the children, but supports a cosmic rhythm to the week (see book list for more information). The seasonal menus are posted on kindergarten notice boards.

Meals are an important part of the morning's activity, and children are involved on a daily basis in the preparation, cooking and serving of food. For many children, the days of the week are recognised by the food of that day: "Today is rice day", or "It's millet day today!" Children with allergies are catered for and efforts are made to ensure all children are able to eat the foods prepared together. If your child has food allergies it is important to update your child's teacher regularly. As the physical body develops, children sometimes grow out of allergies during the time they are in kindergarten.

Festivals always include a feast of relevant delicacies, often brought from home, or prepared in the kindergarten.

The following is a selection of morning snacks regularly prepared and eaten with the children:

- Monday: Rice** Warm brown rice served with plain yogurt and honey
Rice and vegetables
Rice cakes and spreads
'The enchanted Rice Broccoli forest'
- Tuesday: Oats** Porridge with fruit sprinkles
Apple muesli with fruit juice or rice milk
Oatcakes and spreads
Oaty apple crumbles
Flapjacks
- Wednesday: Millet** Roasted millet with carrot sticks and tamari sauce
Millet and honey squares
- Thursday: Rye** Vegetable Soup served with kindergarten-made spelt and rye bread
- Friday: Barley** Home-brought picnic snack - each child brings their own snack which we may eat whilst on a walk, or enjoy as an 'indoor picnic' in cold weather.

Fresh water is always available and accessible for children to help themselves. Warm flower, fruit or herb teas are provided mid-morning. Home-grown mint is used in teas and elderflowers are made into cordial in the summer for special occasions.

*Blessing on the blossom,
Blessing on the fruit,
Blessing on the leaf and stem,
Blessing on the root.
A blessing on our meal.*

Grains for the weekend are: corn/maize for Saturday and wheat on Sunday. Some settings offer Barley on Tuesday and Oats on Friday.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

Along with all early years settings in England, the kindergarten works within the statutory framework of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that is founded on four overarching principles:

- every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships;
- children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The current framework came into being in September 2014. It has three sections:

1. Learning and Development

For younger children, the emphasis for learning and development is founded on three prime areas of communication & language, physical development, and personal, social & emotional development. As children develop, focus is placed more on four specific areas of literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts & design.

Children come to kindergarten with a variety of home languages and learn to pick up English quickly in the rich, oral environment of the kindergarten. English language acquisition is supported through repetition of stories and songs, copies of stories can be given to parents to read at home, puppets are used to embellish storytelling, and parents are invited to help translate specific key words. Staff speak a number of languages including Portuguese, Spanish, Czech and Italian, alongside English.

The Steiner kindergarten environment and staff team provide children with exceptional opportunities to develop in all these prime and specific areas, with some exceptions in the areas of reading, writing and use of computers, where, along with all registered Steiner Schools in England, the kindergarten benefits from exemptions as these do not form part of the Steiner Early Years curriculum. Full details of the exemptions are explained in the attached document: [1-EYFS-STEINER-INTERPRETATION-AND-READOVER-2013.pdf](#) .

The Key Person

The overall Key Person (See EYFS 1.11) is the kindergarten teacher who has the overview of all the children in her group. She will write up assessments, reports and feedback to parents. However, all staff may communicate with parents on a day-to-day basis at drop-off and pick up times.

In order to properly meet the individual needs of each child, and to properly observe and assess their learning and development, each key person should be attentive to around 8-10 children in the group. Therefore, kindergarten assistants may at times be given a key person role in respect of certain children in the group, and they will share information with the kindergarten teacher on a regular basis.

Parents will usually be informed should a specific person other than the kindergarten teacher take on that role.

Sharing learning at home

Parents can support their child's kindergarten experiences by providing healthy rhythms and routines in the home environment, and nourishing food to eat. Extra activities outside school hours are not recommended and may overwhelm and exhaust the young child. Most children enjoy looking at books, and listening to stories, especially about their parents' own life. Children may tell parents about their kindergarten experiences several days after events have happened, as their relationship to time is still developing.

2. Assessment

Continuous observation of the children is undertaken throughout the kindergarten years. Each child has a folder in which observations and learning journeys, together with examples of drawings and crafts are kept. Photographs may be used to support observations. Current emphasis has moved from focusing specifically on 'what' children are learning to acknowledging 'how' children learn – primarily through playing and exploring ("have a go"), through active learning ("keep trying"), and through creating and thinking critically ("having their own ideas and making links"). The kindergarten teacher is available to meet regularly with parents and invites parents to contribute to their child's folder by telling staff about significant changes and developments that have happened at home, for example, learning to ride a bicycle, or the arrival of a new sibling. Parents are given an age-appropriate written assessment of their child each year.

3. Child Protection and Welfare Requirements

The EYFS provides comprehensive guidance on maintaining a safe and healthy indoor and outside environment, on ensuring enough staff are suitably trained and supported, and provides detailed information on all necessary policies and procedures for all early years settings. All staff have appropriate training in these statutory and welfare areas. The Policy file is located in the main school reception and may be viewed upon request. Most school policies are also available on our website.

A copy of the EYFS may be downloaded from: <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eyfs-statutory-framework/>.

Birthdays

*“A star shines bright upon this day,
Altho' the night has flown away.
The star beams falling to the earth,
Scatter their light on your day of birth.”*
Ann Druitt

Birthdays are special for every child, and for the family of every child. Parents are invited to participate in the celebration by joining the whole kindergarten for a simple pedagogical birthday story. Children in the kindergarten may draw birthday cards for the birthday child. Together, parents and teacher discuss when would be a suitable day and time to celebrate each child's birthday. Parents are invited to share a sentence or two about their child's birth, coming into uprightness, walking, first words, and

special events in their child's life. This is kept succinct so that the birthday child is not overwhelmed by the attention, and their classmates can maintain their focus on what is being said.

Summer birthdays are celebrated after the summer holidays, likewise all birthdays are celebrated on or after the day, not before. Children are often delighted and proud to celebrate their 'school birthday', which provides an occasion where the children become aware of their growing years.

Festivals

Festivals form an important part of the kindergarten year. The main festivals celebrated in kindergarten are Michaelmas, Christmas, Easter and St John's Day. Other festivals celebrated include Harvest, Martinmas (in November), Advent, Candlemas (in February) and Whitsun (in May or June).

Children in kindergarten are from diverse cultural backgrounds. In consultation and with help from parents, family festivals celebrated in kindergarten include Chanukah, Diwali, Eid-al-Adha, Thanksgiving, Wesak, Kings Day, Carnival, the Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Jewish New Years and the beginning and end of Ramadam. These festivals are celebrated according to the cultures of the families in kindergarten each year.

Families are invited to some of the whole school Festivals, particularly Martinmas in November and St John's Festival in June/July. Other festivals are planned to take place within the routine of the kindergarten morning. Parents are informed of these in the Calendar of Events.

Eurythmy

Eurythmy is an art of movement developed by Rudolf Steiner and his wife Marie Steiner. It has been developed pedagogically for the Waldorf curriculum, socially for the workplace and other activities, artistically for the stage and curatively for the medical field. It is an art form that breathes life into the soul and the limbs of all who do it and helps to align and harmonize the three essential forces of Thinking, Feeling and Wiling in the human being.

The natural gesture of young children is one of free movement. Eurythmy is brought to the children through a special eurythmy circle of gestures, speech and movement. The children learn how to speak through their limbs, sing through their soul and become aware of one another in their environment. This ability will support them in becoming wholesome individuals later in life in every social context.

The kindergarten eurythmist is Michele Hunter and she visits both kindergartens every week.

Curative Eurythmy: This is therapeutic movement which the curative eurythmist and/or school doctor prescribes for an individual child, in full consultation with the parents. This is a one or two-to-one weekly session with the eurythmy therapist over the course of a half-term or term and then reviewed. The school eurythmy therapist is Sally Lake-Edwards.

Early Years Staff

Britain has a long heritage of early years education including the work of the pioneering MacMillan sisters onwards in the east end of London. Our practice is enriched by the variety of trainings our staff have undertaken, and continue to study, which include Steiner-Waldorf, Froebel, and state training. More recent training and conference participation include Forest School Leadership training, and the work of Emi Pikler in the Respectful Care of the Young Child from birth to three. We work out of anthroposophy (see page 4), an understanding of the development of the human being, and in particular this informs our knowledge of the young child. Members of the staff team regularly attend

workshops and national conferences led by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship.

Kindergarten staff attend a weekly Early Years pedagogical meeting. All staff attend regular in-service training (Inset) days at school. They are invited to attend a monthly whole school faculty meeting, and the College study each week. The kindergarten teachers and Parent and Child group leader are college members and attend weekly college meetings and Trustee/college meetings. Staff are supported by the London Borough of Hounslow Early Years team who provide a range of statutory training including First Aid, Food Hygiene, Safeguarding & Child Protection and Health & Safety.

Staff team September 2016 to July 2017

Katie Sharrock: Kindergarten teacher

- Steiner Waldorf Early Years Care and Education Level 5
- Forest School Leader

Katie discovered Steiner education seventeen years ago and began training as a Kindergarten teacher in 2000. She joined The St Michael Steiner School in 2002 firstly as a kindergarten assistant, led Parent & Child groups and took her first class as kindergarten teacher in 2004, when completing the Diploma in Steiner Waldorf Early Years training. In 2007 she became manager of the Steiner Waldorf inspired nursery at the University of East London, returning to St Michaels in 2009. After completing the level 5 Steiner Waldorf Early Years Care and Education Level 5 in 2009, she qualified as a Forest School Leader level 3 in 2014.

Maria da Costa: Kindergarten teacher

- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), BA Early Childhood Education
- London Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Studies level 5

Maria has a passion for children and has been working with them since 2004. She trained as a mainstream kindergarten teacher in 2010, studying both in Lisbon and in Milan. In Lisbon she taught both in mainstream nursery and kindergarten. In 2011, she moved to London to learn more about Waldorf Education and started volunteering at kindergarten in The St Michael Steiner School. She then took the Waldorf Early Childhood Training Course and worked as Kindergarten Assistant. She is currently one of the kindergarten teachers at school.

Kindergarten Assistants:

Jeannette Cubequeray

- London Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Studies Level 4

Jeannette became acquainted with Steiner education when she joined the Parent and Toddler group at St Paul's Steiner School with her daughter Daniela, who then remained at St Pauls through Class 8, followed by three years at Kings Langley. Her experiences at St Pauls, helping with Parent and Child and the Kindertagens, attending study groups, attending weekend Early Years training at St Paul's and many talks given by the school doctor encouraged her undertake the London Waldorf Early Childhood Training at Steiner House and she has been a Kindergarten Assistant at St Michaels since September 2010. Jeannette also leads one of our morning Parent & Child groups.

Rachel Ford Blanchard

- London Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Studies level 5
- Medical Massage Therapist

Rachel's first experiences in Steiner education were as a Parent & Child craft group leader and then as a parent & child group leader. Rachel is a traditional Waldorf doll maker and runs a doll workshop and doll hospital from her home. She has a passion for teaching and experiencing handwork with both adults and children. Her Canadian upbringing and culture connect her strongly to early years work: the importance of seasonal rhythms, working with hands and heart, outdoor play and free imaginative play were all part of her upbringing and help

form her dedication to her pedagogical practice in the early years department at St Michael's Steiner School. Rachel also leads a weekly seasonal craft group for parents at school.

Sarka Kubschová

- London Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Training level 5
- City and Guilds Diploma for the Children and young People's Workforce Level 3
- NCFE Certificate in Child Care Learning and Development Level 3

Sarka loves singing, making music and sharing it with children. She has worked as a nursery practitioner, nanny, and as an early years practitioner at the Children's Garden in Richmond. She wishes to contribute to creating a nurturing and stimulating environment in which children take their own time and initiative to explore and play. This year, Sarka is also offering guitar lessons for older children in the school.

Parent & Child leader

Leigha Hipkin:

- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), BA (hons) Social Sciences
- Froebel Institute Early Years certificate
- London Waldorf Early Years Training Diploma
- Pikler U.K. Training/Certificate 1 and 2 and Pikler level 1 Budapest
- Simplicity Parenting Family Coach

Leigha initially trained as a class teacher for nine to fourteen year old children specialising in English Literature and Drama. She worked in Children's Homes as an Assistant Housemother, as an Educational Welfare Officer, a Primary Schoolteacher and Early Years practitioner within the State Sector for many years in Inner London. Leigha worked as a Kindergarten teacher at the Waldorf School of South-West London for eight years before co-founding the St. Michael Steiner School with two of her colleagues. She now facilitates Parent and Child groups at school. Her sons both had a full Waldorf education.

Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): Katie Sharrock

Child Protection and Health & Safety: Katie Sharrock

Pediatric First Aid: all staff

All staff have Emergency First Aid training.

The Role of the Teacher and Assistant

The role of any adult in the classroom is to provide a healthy role model for the children who are learning through imitation. The teacher (known in state schools as the 'Key Person') generally leads main activities including ring time, snack and story time, and assistants will often lead practical activities such as snack preparation and other artistic and craft activities. The teacher and assistants build up strong relationships with the children and make efforts to get to know all the children and their families well, many of whom have siblings throughout the school.

The Wider Community

The School is recognized and registered with the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF). Students may undertake yearly 'Assistantship Training' in the early years and staff give talks and welcome visits from students on both Waldorf and mainstream Early Years training courses. Staff coordinate annual meetings for those working in Steiner kindergartens in the London and South East region of the Steiner Waldorf Early Years Group (SWEYG). The school has a positive working relationship with the Early Years team in Hounslow's Education Department, through statutory and non-statutory training and advisory visits.

The school anthroposophical doctor is Dr Jenny Josephson who visits school regularly. She sees children whom teachers, in consultation with their parents, put forward. Additionally, early in the summer term she will see all the 'big' kindergarten children, as part of the admissions procedure for

Class 1.

The kindergarten was inspected by Hounslow Early Years department in November 2012 and gained registration for the Early Education Entitlement funding.

Ofsted/SIS

The kindergarten is inspected as part of the whole school on a regular basis. The last inspection under the Schools Inspection Service (SIS) was in November 2013 and the Early Years received a good report with outstanding features, in particular:

The overall quality and standards of the early years' provision is good. It has an outstanding capacity to maintain continuous improvement. The staff have a clear awareness of the ways in which they wish to develop their provision, including how they will help children and families to benefit from the Steiner approach.....The clear vision of the Kindergarten staff and their deep understanding of the Steiner approach enables them to support individual children's development and learning extremely effectively....The leadership and management of the early years' provision is outstanding....Partnerships with parents and external agencies are very good and frequently outstanding.

The staff have appropriately high expectations of the children's behaviour and learning. They ensure that the children develop good social skills and mutual respect through a well-planned daily routine which reflects the Steiner approach of following the rhythms of the day, week and year. The children acquire particularly good skills in practical learning and concentration which prepare them very effectively when they progress into the school.

The children are happy and enjoy the activities indoors and out. They develop good speaking and listening skills....Cooperative and imaginative play is well promoted...Healthy eating is well promoted and cooked snacks are prepared, with the children helping ...Physical skills and control are very well developed through eurythmy sessions which are taken by a specialist teacher.... A strength of the Steiner approach in the Kindergarten is that the children are able to form appropriate bonds and secure attachments with the adults.

The full report may be downloaded from the school website.

Section 2: Parents and Carers as Partners

The relationship between child, parent/carer and teacher begins before a child joins kindergarten at an initial meeting, and develops into a partnership that is crucial in enabling the healthy development of every child.

Parents Evenings/Afternoons

Termly parents evenings or afternoons provide an opportunity for parents in kindergarten to meet each other and learn more about the School's ethos and ways of working with the children. Refreshments and artistic activities may be followed by:

- a talk on aspects of child development
- a study together
- notices about what is happening in the Early Years / School
- Questions and an opportunity to share ideas
- A guest colleague / speaker (a lower school teacher or specialist subject teacher).

These times are an opportunity to create a supportive circle of adults around the kindergarten groups. Please do try to attend. Dates are provided in the Calendar of Events on the School website and advertised on the kindergarten notice boards.

Communications about individual children take place in the following ways:

One-to-One meetings with parents/carers

Please make appointments to meet with your child's teacher at least once a year, or termly, to discuss your child's development. If you are worried about any aspect of your child's development, it is important that you tell staff. Equally, if staff need to share information with parents, a meeting will be requested.

Home Visits

Home visits can help in the child's settling-in process. Please feel free to invite your child's teacher, she will let you know when she is available. A strong relationship between the teacher, the child and their parents/carers helps children feel secure in their school life.

Other channels of communication

- Brief chats are possible at pick-up and drop-off, but for more in-depth conversations, please book a time with your child's teacher;
- Telephone calls: Your child's teacher may be available by telephone for urgent matters in the evening (please see telephone list for details). If the phone is not answered, please do leave a message and she will respond as soon as possible.
- Short text messages - please make sure we always have your current mobile number.
- Letter and email;
- School Newsletter: published monthly, available on the web site and printed. This includes updates about the Early Years and the whole school. The Community Page gives parents/carers the opportunity to advertise or inform others about particular events.

What do we ask of parents/carers?

- We ask you to work towards understanding the principles that lie behind Steiner Waldorf Education so that you deepen your understanding of what you have chosen for your child and can give the teachers wholehearted support in their work. Parent education workshops are held during the year, as well as 'a day in the classroom' events.
- Please bring your child to kindergarten on time. We offer a flexi-start time (8:30 – 8.45am). If you are late in the morning please let your child's teacher know. If there has been an emergency in the morning and your child has not had breakfast, let us know and we can make a 'breakfast-bar' for your child with a small snack on arrival. When late, your child misses the beginning of creative play and crafts, and often finds settling in harder as games have been well established by their peers.
- Please dress your child in suitable clothing for the time of year – see clothing section.
- Please make sure your child has had enough sleep. Kindergarten age children usually need around twelve hours sleep a day. A tired child may not enjoy their time in kindergarten. Please tell us if your child has sleepless nights so we can provide a restful space during the morning if needed.
- Do not bring your child to school if he or she is very tired/sniffly/unwell. A child who is unwell will not enjoy their kindergarten morning, and may sometimes become reluctant to return to school on other days.
- Your child will only be released to the adults named on your consent form. If your child is to be collected regularly by another adult, please introduce them to a member of staff.
- Please arrive in good time to collect your child when they have finished kindergarten for the day and leave the premises promptly unless you have a legitimate reason for being at school and your child is properly supervised.
- Please limit your child's exposure to television, videos, DVDs, computers, electronic games, cinema and recorded music. It would be of great benefit if they were kept away from them entirely, until an older age.
- Do be open and honest in your communication with the teachers about your child's health, family circumstances and anything else that may affect their behaviour. This will remain confidential. Please keep your child's teacher informed of any changes in the home situation of your child, so that we can be as understanding as possible during the kindergarten sessions.
- We need to be aware of changes in the status between parent/careers and who is responsible on a day-to-day basis for your child.
- Any difficulties with your ability to pay school fees need to be communicated to the school Bursar by telephoning 020 8890 6719 or emailing finance@stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk
- Please familiarise yourself with this handbook, together with the main School Parents Handbook, and with the School's rules, policies and procedures. By respecting and following them yourself, and encouraging your child to do so, you will help with the smooth running of the school. A folder with our policies and procedures is available at reception and most policies are available to view from our website.

Class Contacts

In each class, one or two parents are designated Class Contacts. This year, our Class Contacts are:

- Marcela Feola (Olivia's mother) – Maria's kindergarten
- Suky Bains-Miller (Deya's mother) and Nisa Shah (Zora's mother) – Katie's Kindergarten

The role of Class Contacts is to liaise with the teacher and parents of the class on matters of general interest or information. For example, teachers may ask the Class Contacts to remind people about a parents' meeting or forthcoming festival. Class Contacts should not be involved in matters relating to an individual child - these should be directed to the Class Teacher.

Parent Education

The way we work with the children is very different from what most parents have experienced. We provide workshops for parents and talks by experienced educationalists and those working in related fields and parents are encouraged to participate in these events. This year we are offering anthroposophical talks and Simplicity Parenting courses.

Rudolf Steiner House at 35 Park Road, London NW1 offers a regular, termly programme of courses, talks, conferences, theatre performances and gallery space, as well as a biodynamic café, large lending library and bookshop. Full details may be found at: <http://www.rsh.anth.org.uk/>

Recommended Reading List

Early Years Information Files: The school has a library of reference books available for parents to browse. The file includes copies of Newsletter contributions over the years, as well as other articles about child development, play, outdoor life, and various aspects of parenting. Articles may be photocopied for a nominal fee paid at reception.

The school has a small collection of books about Anthroposophy, Steiner Waldorf Education, parenting and other related subjects. These are available on request for parents to borrow from the Parent Library. The following and many other books about Steiner education are available from the library and bookshop at Rudolf Steiner House (see above) and <http://www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk/>

Books on Steiner Waldorf Education

Waldorf Education, C. Clouder and Martyn Rawson; Floris Books
Education Towards Freedom, F. Carlgren; Lanthorn Press
School as a Journey, Torin Finser; Hawthorn Press
Ready to Learn, M. Rawson, M. Rose; Hawthorn Press

Early Childhood

You are your Child's First Teacher, Rahima Baldwin; Celestial Arts, California
The Incarnating Child, J. Salter; Hawthorn Press
A Guide to Child Health, M. Glöckler and W. Goebel; Floris Books
The Genius of Play, Sally Jenkinson; Hawthorn Press
Well, I Wonder - Childhood in the Modern World and *Under the Sky*, both by Sally Schweizer; Sophia Books
Free to Learn by Lynne Oldfield Hawthorn Press
In a Nutshell – Nancy Foster, WECAN publishing
Simplicity Parenting: Kim Payne
Creative Play for your baby, Janni Nicol & Christopher Clouder, Gaia Books
Creative Play for your toddler, Janni Nicol & Christopher Clouder, Gaia Books

Practical Activities and Festivals

All Year Round, A. Druitt, C. Fynes-Clinton, M. Rowling; Hawthorn Press

The Children's Year, C. Fynes-Clinton, M. Rowling, S. Cooper; Hawthorn Press

Earthwise, by Carol Petrash Floris Books

African-Caribbean Celebrations: Celebrating Customs and Traditions, G Johnson and C Glanville, Hawthorn books

The Birthday Book: Celebrations for Everyone, A. Druitt et al Hawthorn Press

Festivals Together: A Guide to Multi-Cultural Celebration, Sue Fitzjohn, Minda Weston & Judy Large, Hawthorn Press

The Waldorf Kindergarten Snack Book, Lisa Hildreth, Bell Pond Books

Lifestyle and Child Development

Phases of Child Development, B. Lievegoed; Floris Books

Who's Bringing them Up?, M. Large; Hawthorn Press

Fool's Gold, E. Miller; Alliance for Childhood

Free your Child's True Potential, M. Rawson; Hodder & Stoughton

Books about Anthroposophy by Rudolf Steiner

Anthroposophy in Everyday Life; Rudolf Steiner Press

Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy; Anthroposophic Press

The Spirit of the Waldorf School; Anthroposophic Press

Understanding the Human Being; Rudolf Steiner Press

Rudolf Steiner – a biography by Rudi Lissau

Emmi Pikler/Pikler Inspired Books

Unfolding Of Infants' Natural Gross Motor Skills by Emmi Pikler (Pikler Institute)

Dance with me in the Heart: The Adults Guide to Great Infant-Parent Relationships.
by Penny Brownlee (The New Zealand Playcentre Federation)

Websites with useful resources include:

<http://www.simplicityparenting.com/> for advice about parenting

<http://www.steinerwaldorf.org/> for more information about Steiner Waldorf schools in the U.K.

<http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/> supports policies and practices for a healthy, unhurried childhood, with lots of links to interesting and relevant articles.

www.pikler.co.uk for information about this work in the U.K.

Section 3: Practical Issues

How to apply for a Kindergarten Place?

Prospective parents should fill in a Kindergarten Application Form (available on the web site or from Reception). Please fill in the form with as much detail as possible. The more you let us know about your child, the more able we are to help him or her settle into the group and meet his or her needs.

Applications should be submitted, together with the application fee of £50 (cheques payable to the St Michael Steiner School Ltd.) to:

The Admissions Secretary
The St Michael Steiner School
Park Road
Hanworth Park
London TW13 6PN

On receipt of an application, fee and all relevant reports (if asked for), the Administrator will contact you to arrange a time for yourselves and child to meet the kindergarten teachers. This is an opportunity for you to ask questions about the kindergarten pedagogy and our school. Your child may draw or use craft materials and play in the kindergarten while the adults speak together. The meetings usually last around 45 minutes.

Children may join kindergarten the term after their third birthday. Three-year-olds usually attend for a minimum of three mornings, although two mornings may be offered. The main intake of children is in September with a smaller one in January. If there are spaces, children may join throughout the academic year, however children are admitted in the summer term only in exceptional cases.

If the kindergarten groups are full, your child's name will be placed on a waiting list. When a space arises, children are accepted from the waiting list in the following order:

- a. Siblings
- b. Age of child (oldest children are accepted first, subject to their wish to enter the Lower School)
- c. Attendance at Parent & Child groups
- d. Place on the waiting list

Upon acceptance of a place at the school, the deposit must be paid (currently £1,000, (this may be paid in installments). This secures each child's place.

Finances

The school is dependent entirely on school fees being paid. Fees are kept at a minimum to enable as many families as possible to join the school community. Please read the main Parents Handbook for full information about Finances.

Early Education Entitlement (formerly Nursery Education grant)

Children are eligible for the Early Education Entitlement for 15 hours/week (age three and four) from the London Borough of Hounslow. The grant is applied up until the term during which the child turns five years old. The grant is accessed on your behalf each term by school and your invoices will state how many hours of grant your child is entitled to, followed by the amount of fees payable. Please note that absences from kindergarten of more than two weeks could affect the free entitlement place.

Bursary

The school has a bursary scheme which can assist parents with school fees. It is means tested and applications are invited in February each year for the following September start. The Bursary Scheme is not available in conjunction with any other bursary offered by the School or grant offered by the Local Authority. Parents are expected to honour their financial commitments as communicated on the bottom of any invoice they receive from school, without the need for the school to issue a reminder for payment. If you have any further questions with regards to finances, please ring our finance number: 0208 890 6719, or email: finance@stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk

Clothing

Children do not have a school uniform, however for pedagogical reasons children's clothing should be free from logos or cartoon characters. Practical clothing encourages independence and helps children feel confident and skilled.

The kindergarten and outside play is often messy! Whilst aprons are provided for messy indoor activities, parents should provide their child with a full set of waterproof clothing for outdoor play. Clothes can and do get stained by paint, glue, clay, mud and grass so please do not dress your child in unsuitable or precious clothing. Children anxious about keeping their clothing clean are often reluctant to join in activities, limiting their opportunities for work and play.

Please ensure all your child's clothing is clearly named, including footwear. *Many children don't recognise their own clothing.* It may help children to have a limited 'school wardrobe'.

All children should have labelled cloth bag (named on the outside) containing spare clothing. A complete set of everything is needed, plus a plastic bag rolled into a knot for wet clothes.

Your child will need:

- Slippers with enclosed heels and toes (not mules) and thin, non-slip soles. Please try to find plain colours (no logos). Slippers should fit well so please check for foot-growth regularly.
- 1 strong waterproof jacket with hood either with a zip-in warm fleece lining, or big enough to fit over a warm winter jacket for when weather turns cold. Please use this as your child's main coat and do not bring other outdoor coats/jackets to school;
- 1 pair strong waterproof dungarees/over-trousers to remain at school.
- 1 pair welly boots or snow boots to remain at school, big enough for thick warm socks or welly warmers in winter. Snow boots are a good alternative in the winter months, when feet can get very cold in wellingtons.
- Warm hat, gloves and scarf for autumn/winter
- Sun hat and sun cream for sunny days
- Outdoor shoes should be flat and practical (when wellies are not worn), to enable children to run, jump and climb freely and safely.

Settling your child in Kindergarten

Parents/carers are encouraged to stay until both you and your child feel comfortable in the kindergarten. The following is a suggested starting routine for your child to enable them to feel secure in their new surroundings.

Day 1: parent stays for the whole morning, you may acquaint your child with layout, where toys are, toilets etc, and both can share and enjoy the rhythm of the morning.

Day 2: If your child is happy to be left, leave your child for a short time, ensuring you tell your child and staff when you are leaving.

Day 3 and subsequent days – extend separation time for your child, until they are confident to attend a full session happily. Some children need a shorter morning and the teachers will discuss options with you.

The teacher will work with you to enable your child to settle in their own way in the kindergarten. Very occasionally, a child may not settle easily and we may suggest that they try again in one or two terms, when they are older and more able to make the transition from home to school.

Home visits help to build a bond between home and school. Please speak to your child's teacher to arrange a mutually convenient time, ideally within the first term.

Toys in kindergarten

When a child joins kindergarten, a transitional object/toy may help in the settling in process, for example a piece of cloth, or a special soft toy. This object may play an important part in your child's developing trust and confidence in being away from home for the first time. These toys may also be helpful if your child is going through a difficult emotional time or unsettled period at home. Please speak with your child's teacher if this is the case. The teachers will work with you to help your child settle into the kindergarten routines.

As part of creative discipline, children should not bring other home toys to school (except transitional objects – see above). Home toys often distract the children from playing with kindergarten materials and can cause difficulty with sharing with other children. If toys are brought (e.g. to take on a play date after school), do tell the teacher who may keep the toy 'safe' until home time.

Arrivals and Departures

Access to school

Please use the Park Gate for all pedestrian access to school. For security reasons the inner school gates will be locked between the hours of 9am and 2.45pm. The inner gate will be opened between 8.30 to 9.00 and 12.15 and 12.45 for kindergarten pickups only.

Arrival in Kindergarten

Please bring your kindergarten children into the kindergarten and sign them in, and help with their shoes and coats, etc. This is also the time to pass on any urgent information about your child to a member of staff. Over the year, we start kindergarten both outdoors or in the kindergarten room, depending on the weather/seasons and activities of the day.

Signing in and out

Please fill in the signing-in and out time-sheets located near the door. These may also be used to confirm if your child is to be collected by another adult. At pick-up time, a member of staff may need to speak to you about some aspect of your child's day.

Whilst from time to time emergencies occur which may make you late for pick up, please note that for persistent late collections beyond 15 minutes, financial penalties may apply.

Parking

Please park in the public car park to the right of the school drive, or on Park Road outside school, and please give due consideration to the school's neighbours. Do not drive your car onto school premises.

Next Steps

Most kindergarten children apply for and are accepted to join our Lower school in Class 1, in the year following their sixth birthday. However, attending kindergarten does not mean automatic entry in Class 1 and there is an application procedure in place. Summer born (June, July and August) children will often stay in kindergarten for the year after their sixth birthday and begin Class 1 when they are seven years old.

Parents are invited to apply for Class 1 during their child's final kindergarten year. The kindergarten teacher will meet with these parents to talk through the procedure. The class 1 admissions group comprises kindergarten teacher/s, eurythmist, class teacher and school doctor. A 'big children's club' weekly session is usually arranged during the spring and summer term for those children, when special crafts and activities are undertaken in a social group.

Children from other schools and kindergartens also join the school in Class 1, subject to space.

Section 4: Procedures and Policies

A list of all school policies and procedures is found in the main Parents Handbook, a file containing paper copies of them all is available in Reception and they are available to view on our website. Here are statements from the main policies and procedures.

Creative Discipline and Behaviour

All children learn and grow in their understanding of socially appropriate and desirable behaviour. During the kindergarten years, the child is developing into a social being and one of the tasks of the kindergarten teacher is to create and maintain an environment where the child can imitate and develop socially acceptable behaviour in small groups and whole class situations. As adults supporting the children's development, we encourage:

- respect and care of self, others, and the environment
- the development of self-regulation
- the development of high self-esteem and self confidence

In the kindergarten environment children feel secure and safe through rhythm and routine in daily activities, and the teacher and assistants endeavour to be role models worthy of imitation. We have clear and consistent boundaries, although each child is treated individually and according to their age and stage of development. We do not use corporal punishment.

Each new child comes to kindergarten on the basis of a term's trial, with a discussion/ review at the half term. If at the end of this term the child has not settled, the trial may be extended if the teachers deem it appropriate, and a plan of action created to help the child and look at specific needs and issues alongside our colleagues, the College of Teachers, and the parents. If the child has been at kindergarten longer and a problem arises, every effort will be made with parent support to reintegrate the child into the group. If we are unable to provide the necessary support to meet the child's developmental needs, we may ask the child to leave, but this would only be after all other avenues have been explored, both in house and outside agencies.

In house:	Early years practitioners College of Teachers
In-house therapists:	Eurythmy School doctor
Outside agencies:	Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Advisory Service Hounslow Early Years Advisory team

Television and Media

Generally, Steiner Waldorf teachers prefer that young children do not watch television or video at all. There is plenty of research data available to confirm the ill effects on the physical, emotional and social development of young children from watching television. Teachers strive to enable lively pictures in the child's imagination with stories, circles and puppet shows, and these efforts are contradicted by television / film images. The children also mimic gestures they have passively absorbed. However, we do realise and understand that families contain complexities that are difficult to negotiate, please do your best to select and limit viewing.

We would like parents to support us by not allowing the children to watch TV in the mornings before coming to school, and preferably also not during the week. This helps the whole group in terms of sharing wholesome play. Kindergarten toys are simple to allow the child to fill in the details with their imagination.

If your child is used to a heavy diet of television watching, don't despair! It may be easier than it sounds to change your family routine. Many parents have discovered that one-time TV addicts have found a wealth of positive things to do in the creative and supportive atmosphere of a Steiner school community. Speak to your child's teacher if you need some suggestions. There are also a wide range of books with ideas and activities in our book list.

Safeguarding Children

The St Michael Steiner School strives to create an environment where learning, truth, justice, respect, spirituality and community are promoted. Consequently, the overall aim of this policy is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our care, regardless of age, class, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. In situations where child abuse is suspected, our paramount responsibility is to the child. We recognise that everyone who comes into contact with the children in our school in their everyday work has a duty to safeguard and protect them and should demonstrate commitment and priorities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Our policy applies to all adults with whom our children come into contact with, be they staff, trustees, parents and volunteers.

If staff are worried about the safety or welfare of a child within school we have a legal duty and responsibility to act on our concerns. Some signs of possible abuse and neglect may include:

- significant changes in children's behaviour;
- deterioration in children's general well-being;
- unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect;
- children's comments which give cause for concern;
- any reasons to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting, for example in the child's home; and/or
- inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff, or any other person working with the children. For example: inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images.
- suspected FGM will be reported to the police.

Wherever possible we will discuss our concerns with parents and carers in the first instance, and if necessary, make a referral to Children's Social Care in Hounslow. If you wish to discuss any aspect of Child Protection please speak with the Designated Members of Staff (DMS) for Child Protection:

Katie Sharrock : early years/school

Dorothea van Breda: school

Support and advice for Early Years:

Hounslow Family Information Services: 020 8583 3470

Hounslow Child Protection Hotline: 020 8583 6600 option 1 (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)

Hounslow Out of hours Emergency Duty Team for Social Care: 020 8583 2222

Special Educational Needs

Our kindergarten considers all children to be special and that every child has individual needs. Our kindergarten admits children with special educational needs whenever this is possible, given the specific needs of the child, the needs of the whole class group, and the nature of our provision.

The Steiner Early Childhood curriculum is holistic and concentrates on the child as an individual, putting them central in their ideals particularly when working with the parents on shared perceptions of their needs, abilities and developmental stages. We hope that our Early Years curriculum will enable all children to achieve their full potential. Every endeavour will be taken to accommodate the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs of each child.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): We do admit children with Health and Social Care statements of need, and may employ extra staff to ensure that the child's needs are met. Individual Education Plans and Play Plans are created for children who need extra support during a specific period of their life. The SEND for the Early Years is Katie Sharrock, who supports the rest of the staff in this area of their work.

It is a requirement that parents of children who have additional needs meet with the Early Years teachers half-termly/termly to review and plan the continued support of their child together.

Extra support available: We draw on the expertise of the school doctor, Dr. Jenny Josephson, eurythmy therapist Sally Lake-Edwards, and Hounslow Early Years Advisors /SENDS.

Disability Discrimination

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, in our Early Years department we will:

- think ahead and anticipate what we may need to do for a disabled child so that they can be included in the life of the setting as fully as possible, for example, checking policies, such as an admissions policy to ensure we do not discriminate against disabled children;
- take advice about the management of a condition and consider whether we may be able to adapt routine procedures to accommodate a child;
- consider how we can provide support to include children with disabilities in the full range of activities, for example, staff training, changes to the layout of the physical environment;
- liaise with parents and relevant professionals to best meet the needs of each child.

Inclusion

The St Michael Steiner School is working towards being an equal opportunities employer.

The kindergartens are committed to making Steiner Waldorf education available to all who choose it regardless of religious or cultural beliefs, ability or social and financial background, and that each child and adult is valued as an individual without racial or gender stereotyping.

In kindergarten, we want children to grow up knowing that all people are of equal worth whatever their racial origin, culture, religion, language or ability; we want the children to respect and value the difference between people and to celebrate the richness that there is in diversity. Together in our

community we look to find ways of celebrating our common humanity, of finding unity in our diversity. We work with parents and their extended families to support us.

We prepare our children for society by helping them develop empathy. Our curriculum aims to create the conditions for this, for true and genuine interest in the other. If we, the teachers can cultivate this feeling of respect for and interest in one another, the children in our care will learn by our example.

We are fully committed to the active promotion of equality of opportunity for all children, families and staff in the kindergarten. We strive for our kindergartens to be active members of our extended community.

First Aid

First Aid is emergency care given to an injured person (in order to minimize injury and future disability) before professional medical care is available. Teachers and other staff are expected to use their best endeavors at all times, particularly in emergencies, to secure the welfare of pupils in the same way that parents might be expected to act towards their children. In general, consequences of taking no action are likely to be more serious than those of trying to assist in an emergency.

At The St Michael Steiner School every effort is made to minimize the risk of accidents and carry out regular risk assessments (written or discussed) but we recognise that accidents may still occur. The First Aider present at any accident will deal with the accident and treat any injuries as required. A First Aider will always accompany children on walks off the school premises.

All our early years staff have up-to-date paediatric First Aid certificates.

Grievance/complaints procedure

In the event of a complaint by a parent or member of staff please, if possible, first contact the teacher responsible. If parents remain unsatisfied then they may follow the grievance procedure available from the Administrator and also available in the main school Parents Handbook. All complaints will be treated in confidence.

*“The Healthy Social Life is found
When in the mirror of each human soul
The whole community finds its reflection,
And when in the community
The virtue of each one is living.”*

This is the motto of social ethic.

Rudolf Steiner, 1920

If you wish to contact Ofsted:

Telephone: (general) 0300 123 1231

Telephone: (concerns) 0300 123 4666

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

Address: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street,
Manchester M1 2WD

If you wish to contact the Schools Inspection Service:

Website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk

Address: The School Inspection Service,
Tolbury House, Brutn, Somerset BA10 0DG

The St Michael Steiner School
Park Road Hanworth Park London TW13 6PN
Tel: 020 8893 1299 info@stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk
<http://www.stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk/>
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