

# The St Michael Steiner School

Hanworth Park, Park Road, London TW13 6PN

## NEWSLETTER

11<sup>th</sup> November, 2016

Park Road, Hanworth Park, London TW13 6PN

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### Dates for Your Diary

#### NOVEMBER

Sat 19 — 11am-2pm Open Saturday

#### DECEMBER

Sat 3 — Advent Fair

Friday 16 — (TBC) End of Term

#### JANUARY

Mon 9 — INSET DAY (no school)

Tue 10 — 8.30am First Day of Term

Mon 23 — 7.30pm Class 5 Parents Evening

Wed 25 — 7pm Kindergarten Parents Evening

Sat 28 — 11am-2pm Open Saturday

Mon 30 — 7pm Class 4 Parents Evening

#### FEBRUARY

Thu 9 — 3.45pm School Ends for Half-Term

### News from the Early Years



We warmly welcome our new children and their families: Fausto, Scarlett, Mia, Aubrey, Suzanne, Mio and Frankie in Maria's kindergarten, and Muadh and Raphael in Katie's group. We are glad all have settled in well.

We returned after half term to a Halloween day of apple bobbing and jammy pieces, apple faces and Jack-o'Lantern carving, culminating in the story of the Hobgoblin who did naughty things, which the children did enjoy!

We are now preparing for Martinmas, creating beautifully painted and oiled paper lanterns, with handles threaded with alder-wood beads made by us all during the first few weeks of term. We look forward to our lantern-lit walkway with all the...

...the children and parents this Friday evening.

Lastly, with the days drawing in and cold winds blowing, it feels the right time to be finding a cosy space indoors during the long evenings. We are aware many families struggle with screen-free for children and do appreciate the efforts many parents make to support our philosophy. The Commercial Free Childhood website ([www.commercialfreechildhood.org](http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org)) has a number of helpful ideas on how to support screen-free time, including the following:

- Cover over television screens with a cloth, or even rearrange furniture so the television is not too intrusive. Help create a calm environment for meals without mobiles, thus supporting your child with the dinner table eating and conversation.
- Creative play, for example cardboard boxes, cloths, water play – washing dolls or the dishes; simple crafts like modeling wax, crayons and paper, or try putting some toys away to 'rest' for a while – sometimes 'less is more'.
- Play outside – enjoy more walks in the dark with a candle-lit lantern, and at weekends enjoy wrapping up warm in hats, scarves and gloves to enjoy the autumn colours and winter landscapes.
- Do try to limit your own screen-time, especially in the evenings before your child is going to bed, children learn so much through imitation!

Thank you for all your help and support of our work with your children.

I go with my bright little lantern  
My lantern is going with me  
In heaven the stars are shining  
On earth shines my lantern for me  
The light goes bright all through the night  
La bimba la bamba la bim.

*Katie Sharrock  
For the early years team*

### **Help support the school's Martinmas 'Wrap Up London' collection**

This Friday, the kindergarten and classes 1 & 2 will be celebrating the festival of St Martin by holding a lantern walk around the school grounds. This festival celebrates the life of St Martin who, according to legend, met a beggar whilst serving as a soldier in the city of Amiens. He took his cloak and cut it in two, sharing it with the beggar. In recognition of this generosity, our school is participating this year with "Wrap Up London", an organisation set up to collect spare coats which are then distributed to help a range of people in need including the homeless, elderly, refugees, women who have fled domestic violence and children in poverty. All contributions to be in by Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November. Please give your donations to Katie in the School Kindergarten. Thank you for your support.

*Katie and Leigha*

If you have something you would like to contribute to the Newsletter - maybe you would like to write something about a school event, or maybe you have been to an interesting talk outside the school, or perhaps you have a selection of photos! - send your contributions to [admin@stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk](mailto:admin@stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk) The deadline for the next newsletter is Monday 5th December.

## From the College of Teachers

Every summer, the College 'retreats' for two or three days to reflect on the year gone by and to review the direction and development of the school. During the process, we revisit the vision we had when we talked about founding a new school, sixteen years ago, about what still holds true for us and what has changed, so that the picture we carry with us through the year ahead is enlivened.

We began each day of the retreat by studying together a lecture from one of the basic texts of Waldorf Education, *Foundations of Human Experience* by Rudolf Steiner. The first Waldorf School was founded in Stuttgart in 1919, and the lectures in this book were given to the teachers in preparation for the opening of the school; there is a worldwide initiative to mark the centenary by studying them in our schools over the next three years. There has always been study in our College meetings, and in the various faculty meetings (Early Years, Lower School and High School) but we decided that we wanted to make it possible for everyone who works in the school to study together. This has been happening since term started; on Thursdays at 4 pm all staff are invited to study these lectures, as well as those given by Rudolf Steiner at the same time, in two other books, *Practical Advice to Teachers* and *Discussions with Teachers*. Since half term, we have also been singing together before the study, which is something we do in the lead up to Christmas and Easter every year in preparation for the festivals.

As some of you will remember, we made a decision several years ago that we would increase the amount of practical work in the curriculum. This was because we recognised that children lead increasingly sedentary lives outside school - being driven everywhere, sitting in front of screens for more of their free time - and were no longer meeting enough opportunities for practical problem-solving and to develop skill with even simple tools, because of fears for their safety. At that point, we extended woodwork into the younger classes. This year, we reviewed that decision and the reasons for it, and came to the conclusion that crafts are needed more than ever, but that wood is a very hard material that requires a great deal of will; development of skills takes a long time, and, although almost everyone enjoys it, some of the children become disheartened before they have mastered the necessary skills. Nicole Cataldo, our woodwork teacher, is on maternity leave this term, and we are taking the opportunity to work more with clay modelling throughout the school. Meanwhile, crafts and handwork of all kinds continue to be a significant element in the curriculum.

The sedentary nature of life, especially for High School students, also led us to look at movement, and we have introduced a daily fifteen-minute movement session - alternating Eurythmy and Bothmer Gymnastics - before afternoon school in Classes 9 and 11.

Another impulse that came from the retreat was to work more closely with parents. It is vital that parents understand and support what we do with their children, and that they know what thinking lies behind our curriculum and methods. On Wednesday mornings from 8:45 to 9:45, Brian Jacques is running a study group for parents. This is regularly attended by about 17 people. At the moment, they are working with Peter Selg's book *The Essence of Waldorf Education*. Leigha Hipkin, who runs our Parent and Child groups, is running a course called '*Simplicity Parenting*', also on Wednesdays, from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. On Tuesday mornings, Rachel Ford-Blanchard runs a craft group for parents from 8:30 to 11 am. Dorothea van Breda, Class 5 teacher, runs a peripatetic evening study group for the parents in her class.

These are recent developments; all will be reviewed and renewed regularly. Essentially, the original vision for our school remains unchanged: a modern, urban school that addresses the needs of children who are growing up in London, but who are citizens of the world in the 21st century. What and how we teach is drawn from observation of the children, understanding of child development, which comes from study, and evaluation and experience of the effect our practice has on the children; how it helps their development into strong, confident, capable adults. In July we graduated our first Class 12, and these students provided us with our first picture of what can be accomplished by working in this way. It was a very pleasing picture.

### This year the College members are:

Pat Alexander  
Amanda Bell (Chair)  
Dorothea van Breda  
Leigha Hipkin  
Michèle Hunter  
Brian Jacques  
Eleni Karakonstanti  
Stuart Purdy  
Katie Sharrock  
Stella Ottewill (Administrator) (Ex-officio)

Amanda Bell



### Tuesdays with Rachel

I am writing this as an open invitation to anyone who would like to join our craft group from after half term. And to let you know what we are up to and how our Tuesday mornings are going.

I felt compelled to write this update after a few weeks in Rachel's class so that, if you feel called and you have the space, you can join us knowing a bit more about it.

So far, we have learned the basics of needle felting and by some miracle, I have a felt mushroom complete with gnomes and pumpkins sitting in the middle of our kitchen table.

I also just collected leaves in preparation for the leaf vase we are making next week.

I feel like I am 10 years old in the best way – and getting a real experience in my body of being held by a Steiner-trained teacher – with kindness, humour and creativity.

We are learning about the seasons and festivals that shape our year (and, therefore, us) and becoming more conscious of each one and the shifts between them is very meaningful. We have read poems and created Michael angel candles for our homes. And I now have a season wheel on our fridge door (and several others that I am making for friends).

One thing we need to make really clear is that no natural inner craftiness is required. Or experience. Just a willingness to sit still and learn and work with wood and glass and wax and wool on a Tuesday morning.

We hope you will join us,

Hollie Holden

## A Visit from Veteran James Toler

James Toler was invited to talk to the upper school during their Global Issues lesson on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

He was asked because of his background in the U.S. Army Services, where he served for 29 years. James was a medical student at the time and finding himself in the army, he became a para-medical, then rescue pilot and lastly a diplomatic pilot flying army authorities and dignitaries around the world into war zones.

To keep hold of his sanity during wartime, he would play and sing for himself and to his friends, eventually writing his own music. Due to a helicopter accident, he became retired in his 50s. He has since become a singer/songwriter/producer travelling the world sharing his art where it is needed and raising funds for causes in need. He is also busy travelling the globe as a Veteran for Peace, raising a voice against violence, and standing for justice. He recently returned from the Standing Rock Dakota reservation conflict. Whilst bringing his songs and art to places and people in need, he is currently working with The House Of Dreams orphanage in the Philippines and has aspirations to start another.

James shared his stories with class 9 and class 11, told them of his crossroads and choices as a young man, where his inclinations lay and what the turn-out was. He then brought their attention to the situation in the world today and what can be done about violence. Jasper led the questioning section with a deep concern about when violence is justified. The discussions evolved around the students' thoughts about the topic and James helped guide them towards what they can do as individuals when it's their time to choose.

The students were engaged, curious, interested, shared comments and ideas between them, asked questions and tried to defend the case for and against violence if they found themselves faced with a difficult situation. Overall, the discussion proved to be an inspiring and empowering interaction.

Michèle Hunter

# A Year of Craft

Create sacred spaces in the home and nurture loved ones through intentional crafting. This **adult only** craft space will explore the inward process of the seasons and festivals while creating beautiful pieces for our homes.

**All crafting abilities welcome**

**Tuesdays from 8:45am-10:45am**

**Prepaid for each half-term**

**Spaces are limited so please register with Grace in reception if interested 020 8893 1299**

## Firewood for sale

We have split logs, approximately 10 inches long.

The wood is from the school grounds and is a mixture of ash, oak, lime and sycamore all seasoned for 1 year.

Bags £4 each

or

3 Bags for £10

Please ask at Reception for Dan the caretaker



You read last spring about the eurythmy festival at Rudolf Steiner House and the story of the little white butterfly performed so beautifully by India

Armstrong from St Michael Steiner School. Michèle Hunter who worked with India, interviews her about her solo project -- in the garden of course — and the you can now read the interview on our website:

[www.stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk](http://www.stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk)

# COMMUNITY PAGES

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.

## KINDLING



### INTRODUCING FAMILIES TO KINDLING

(The Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood).

I would like to share with you what I believe is a wonderful resource for bringing **Steiner Waldorf** principles and practice to anyone caring for the child between birth and seven. **KINDLING** is a printed magazine which includes themed articles in each issue, such as the most recent, which focussed on warmth, including environments, clothing, love and care, and warming woolly crafts. It also includes other topics such as natural health, songs, stories, puppetry and crafts, special features, workshops and conferences, current debate etc. (We still have some copies left). Some past themes were movement, nutrition, outdoors, storytelling, sleep, the senses, play. The next issue will be on 'pre' literacy and numeracy.

**KINDLING** is printed in Spring and Autumn and is available in printed form by subscription only. The annual cost is £11 (two issues) including p&p.

Please email us for further information on: [earlyyearsnews@aol.com](mailto:earlyyearsnews@aol.com)

Janni Nicol

## Childminders

If you are a registered childminder or would like to do the free local authority training to become one; if you work or would like to work in a Waldorf inspired way, please contact Leigha or Katie. There are parents in the Parent and Child groups who need to return to work outside the home in Spring time. There are also parents in Kindergarten and older classes interested in part time/after school care.

We would be delighted to support you with half termly workshops/mentoring to help create a network of much needed childminders in our Community.

Thank you