

# The St Michael Steiner School

## Curriculum Policy

### Steiner Waldorf Education

Steiner Waldorf education is now one of the largest independent school movements in the world. Rudolf Steiner 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 that if they did not do so, Steiner Waldorf education would become a method as good as, but no better than many other methods.

The richness and diversity of our curriculum, which integrates intellectual, practical, physical and artistic development, provides what any child needs to flourish, and is also indispensable for children with special educational needs. Differentiation in tasks set and in degrees of independence and support given to different children are normal aspects of our work and are integral to the planning of lessons in all classes. (See the SEND policy for more details of how we support children.)

### Curriculum planning

- The school does not recognise a fixed curriculum for Steiner Waldorf Education and actively encourages teachers to develop their own curriculum content, based on ongoing study of Child Development in the light of Anthroposophy, and observation and study of the children in their classes. This means that the lessons taught in each class from year to year will be different, because the children are different.
- To ensure that all of the children receive the best possible education, the College of Teachers oversees and takes responsibility for all of the teaching that takes place in the school.
- Teachers are given guidelines for lesson planning, and certain content is expected, but there is no requirement to use the same format.
- Teachers should put their lesson planning into the appropriate folder on the desktop of the computer in the staff room where it is accessible to all members of staff. All staff have been given the password. Alternatively, hard copies may be put into the wooden boxes in the staff room.
- Mentors are responsible for checking their mentees' planning regularly.
- Other College members should look at various samples of planning from time to time.
- We operate an 'open door' policy in the school so that any teacher may ask to visit any lesson. We request that all teachers welcome visits from their colleagues so that we can all take responsibility for the work that goes on in the school.

### General Overview

Bearing in mind what has already been said, what follows is a general overview of what might be expected in different areas of the school and in each class.

### The Early Years

We understand that physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual development needs to be integrated in every human being. Between the ages of three and seven, the real work of children is their creative free play, through which their will forces are strengthened while, at the same time, they learn to become social beings and to integrate into a group. The Kindergarten provides an environment for this play and one in which the children can learn about the world through healthy imitation, which is the natural impulse of children at this age. Toys are of natural materials and 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 houses - so that the child can 'finish' them with his or her own imagination. There are also more structured activities during the morning such as painting, drawing, sewing, beeswax modelling, baking and simple woodworking as well as more formal, adult-led social ones like puppet shows, story telling, Eurythmy, circle games, singing and small meals prepared and eaten together.

Within all these activities, daily and weekly rhythms are maintained, providing the child with a sense of security and trust, leading to self-confidence and trust in the world. Rhythms help the child come to an understanding of time, and memories are enhanced by recurring experiences such as annual festivals in the kindergarten.

About halfway through their seventh year, the children are usually ready to enter the Lower School.

### **The Lower and Middle School - The Class Teacher Period**

*"If you notice in the right way, with sensitivity, what wants to develop in people at six or seven years of age, and if you have not become a teacher but are a teacher, then an awareness for this most wonderful riddle awakens through the innermost living forces...the developing person continuously offers himself to your soul's eye."*

*Rudolf Steiner*

Teachers in the school work out of Anthroposophy and, through their own continuing observation of the children, try to meet their changing needs in a creative and living way, bringing them challenges as well as encouragement and joy in their work. In order to be able to work in this way, a good relationship must grow between teacher and child, between teacher and parent and between teachers.

### **The Main Lesson**

Class Teachers work with four week blocks as far as possible, but some are three weeks. We have found that working in blocks means that each topic can be entered into deeply and thoroughly and, through continuity, the children can form a strong connection with their work.

The Main Lesson is carefully and rhythmically structured so that the children have to listen, work independently, participate and think at different times and also so that their artistic and imaginative nature is developed; Main Lessons often involve singing, music, recitation, movement, painting and stories as well as writing and drawing.

### **Subject Lessons**

Subject lessons in eurythmy, games, music, knitting, painting, modelling, form drawing, foreign languages and religion are taught from class one onwards, sometimes by the Class Teacher and sometimes by specialist teachers. Other subjects, such as crochet, sewing, clay modelling, woodworking, gardening and gym, are introduced later, each at an appropriate age to meet the developmental needs of the children. Each day's timetable is structured so that there is a healthy balance between intellectual, artistic and physical activity, as far as is practical.

### **Eurythmy**

Eurythmy lessons are given throughout the school. Children in the younger classes have a weekly lesson. This expands to two around Class 4 and then, from Class 9, Eurythmy is taught as a Module block of daily 2 hour lessons for 3 - 4 weeks once or twice a year. We also have a Eurythmy therapist who works with indications given by the school doctor and on the advice of Class Teachers.

## **Games**

In the movement lessons the children develop social skills, spatial awareness, balance, agility, and coordination through rope-skipping, throwing and catching and age-appropriate games. From Class 3, Bothmer Gymnastic exercises are introduced beginning with roundelays and progressing to more complicated exercise forms. Bothmer not only strengthens spatial awareness but also mirrors the inner experience of development children are going through, albeit unconsciously. Competition is not actively discouraged, nor is it encouraged; it is found naturally in many children and is not the focus or the means of motivation in the lessons. Some classes have weekly swimming sessions at the local pool. Pre-sport games are played from around Class 5 after which some sports are introduced. Class 5, in conjunction with their study of Ancient Greece, also train in classical athletics: long distance running, sprinting, javelin, discus, high and long jump and classical wrestling. At the end of the year they take part in the 'Greek Olympics' at Michael Hall School in Sussex.

From Class 6 onwards, team sports such as Hockey, Rugby, Basketball, Volleyball, Netball and Ultimate are introduced.

## **Languages**

From Class 1, the children learn two European languages, German and French. In the first three classes, they are taught through songs, games and little plays, so that they are immersed in the quality of the language they are studying. Grammar and the written word are introduced in Class 3 or 4. From Class 9, students may also choose to study Spanish. Language study aims to encourage understanding and appreciation of other cultures alongside the practical advantages of acquiring communication skills in other languages.

## **Arts & Crafts**

Art, handwork and crafts are central to our curriculum. They develop practical skills, problem solving, initiative and many other things. Drawing, painting, knitting, crochet, sewing, embroidery, woodwork, pottery, clay modelling, origami, basketry etc. are taught throughout the school. Children make a variety of articles that are not merely decorative, but have a real use, such as toys, flute or handwork bags, clothing, items of furniture, musical instruments, baskets, boxes etc. They are led to an awareness of how beauty and usefulness can be combined through good design.

Part of the curriculum is also learning about where the materials come from, for example, working with wood sourced from the school grounds and with raw fleece, washing, carding, spinning and dyeing it as well as with ready-processed yarns and threads. This work connects with stories about different kinds of trees and plants in 'Home Surroundings' lessons in classes 1 – 3 to looking at, handling and using different materials.

As they get older, the children learn to use different art materials such as pastels, charcoal, acrylic paints and watercolours.

## **Music**

Singing is an integral and daily aspect of the curriculum. Class Teachers and Music Teachers introduce the pupils to a wide range of percussion instruments and songs. Singing and instrument playing are tools for teachers to help children develop listening skills, which can then be applied to other areas of learning. All children learn to play the pentatonic and diatonic flute. From Class 3, children are encouraged to learn to play another instrument such as violin, silver flute, guitar and, later, piano. We also develop music as part of the children's social and cultural and movement education. Classes 5-8 sing together in the choir once a week. We plan to develop an ensemble, and, eventually, an orchestra.

## The High School

The High School programme is designed to give the students a foundation in a broad range of subjects, to develop practical and study skills and to encourage initiative and independence in learning. In Classes 10, 11 and 12, we offer assessment and certification through the new Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education (NZCSE or CSE) at levels 1, 2 and 3. The CSE is externally moderated and gives students access to university at Level 3, with University Entrance Levels in Maths and English.

In Classes 9 and 10, there is a course of compulsory Main Lessons for all students throughout the year, supported by regular weekly lessons in Global Issues and foreign languages (a choice of French, German and Spanish). In addition, we offer elective modules in a variety of arts and crafts. There is a requirement, in order to keep the curriculum broad at this stage, that students take at least one Movement module, one Craft module and one Studio Arts module over the year.

Midway through Class 10, students are consulted and advised about their hopes and plans for the future. We refer to what they tell us, as well as our own knowledge and experience, in our planning for Classes 11 and 12. There is an increasing number of optional Main Lessons and elective arts, crafts and supplementary lessons in these years, so that students can begin to focus on their areas of particular interest. Some compulsory Main Lessons continue, and students must choose at least one subject from each of the core CSE subject areas at each level.

In Class 11, the students undertake two weeks of work experience.

In Class 12, part of the programme is devoted to a major personal project.

There is the possibility of student exchanges for those interested in improving their French, German or Spanish. We also offer students from other countries the opportunity to visit and study with us.

The programme for each year depends on demand, space, individual students' needs, curriculum development, facilities and availability of staff.

A course directory, listing all courses offered, is published every year for parents and students. (See High School Course Directory).

## The St Michael Steiner School Curriculum Guidance

The table shows an outline of the subjects recommended<sup>1</sup> and approximate time given to each subject in each class. Teachers may interpret them freely to suit the particular needs of a class, provided the curriculum used is age appropriate and hygienic.

Especially in the older classes, there will be some overlap in Main Lesson blocks. e.g. Nature study and Geography, Chemistry and Geography, History and English. In the younger classes, these subjects are, anyway, not differentiated.

The specific content of each block and lesson is decided by the relevant teacher and is contained in their lesson plans and overall aims for their lessons. Teachers should be aware of the curriculum indications given by Rudolf Steiner, on which this guidance is based.

Main Lessons are taught by the Class Teacher in the Lower and Middle School (Classes 1 - 8) In the older classes, sometimes even from Class 6 onwards, but especially in the High School, Main Lesson blocks are taught by specialist teachers.

Main Lessons are 2 hours per day. Blocks are 3 - 4 weeks. Subject lessons are usually 45 minutes each.

Class	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Main Lessons</b> (+ no. of Blocks)	English - 3 Maths - 3 Home Surroundings - 3	English - 3 Maths - 3 Home Surroundings - 3	English - 3 Maths - 3 Farming - 2 Old Testament - 1 Building - 1	English - 3 Maths - 3 Mythology - 2 Geography - 1 Nature study (animals) - 1	English - 3 Maths - 3 Mythology - 2 Geography - 1 Nature study (Plants) - 1	English - 2 Maths - 3 History - 2 Geography - 1 Nature study (plants and animals)- 1 Physics - 1
<b>Weekly Lessons</b> (as considered appropriate in each class)	German, French, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	German, French, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	German, French, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	German, French, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	German, French, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	English, Maths, German, French, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion.
Class	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Compulsory Main Lessons</b> (+ no. of Blocks)	English - 2 Maths - 2 History - 2 Geography - 1 Nature study (human physiology) - 1 Physics - 1 Chemistry - 1 Astronomy - 1	English - 2 Maths - 2 History - 2 Geography - 1 Nature study (Human anatomy) - 1 Physics - 1 Chemistry - 1 Astronomy - 1	English - 2 Art History - 1 Maths - 2 History - 1 Geography - 1 Biology - 1 Physics - 1 IT - 1	English - 2 Art History - 1 Maths - 2 History - 1 Geography - 1 Biology - 1 Physics - 1 IT - 1	Parzival (English) Projective Geometry Embryology Work Experience	Modern Literature Evolutionary Biology Personal Project

<sup>1</sup> Recommendations from Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for the Waldorf School, and from current practice in our school

<b>Elective Main Lessons</b>					Calculus Romantic Poetry Creative Writing Chemistry Botany Astronomy Medieval History - 2 blocks Geography	Calculus & Maths Binomial Theorem & Complex Number Theory Organic Chemistry Physics Biology Astronomy/ Cosmology Russian Literature Film Studies Modern Drama Creative Writing Modern History Philosophy Economics Geography
<b>Morning Modules</b> (Elective )			Eurythmy, Dance, Music, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Sculpture, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama, Dressmaking and other crafts.	Eurythmy, Dance, Music, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Sculpture, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama, Dressmaking and other crafts.	Eurythmy, Dance, Music, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Sculpture, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama, Dressmaking and other crafts.	Eurythmy, Dance, Music, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Sculpture, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama, Dressmaking and other crafts.
<b>Weekly Lessons</b> (as considered appropriate in each class)	English, Maths, German, French, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion.	English, Maths, German, French, Music, P.E., Religion, Eurythmy, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama.	English, Maths, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Music, Choir, P.E., Global Issues, Tutorials.	English, Maths, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Music, Choir, P.E., Global Issues, Tutorials.	Choir (optional) P.E. (optional) Global Issues	Choir (optional) P.E. (optional) Global Issues