



The St Michael Steiner School



NEWSLETTER

11th December 2009

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Peace on Earth Toward Men of Good Will

Dates for Your Diary

DECEMBER

Thur 17th Lower School
Christmas Festival
11am - 1.30pm

Fri 18th Term ends 12.30pm

JANUARY

Mon 11th STAFF INSET 10 - 4

Tue 12th Back to school 8.15

Tue 19th Class 7&8 and
Kindergartens
parents' meeting
7 - 8.30

Sat 23rd Parents' workday
(TBC)

Sat 30th "A Day in the
Classroom" An
education workshop
for parents.

FEBRUARY

Tue 2nd Class 1&2 parents'
evening 7 - 8.30pm

Sat 6th Open day 10 - 12.30

Sun 7th -

Sat 13th Class 7&8 away in
Switzerland

Thu 11th School ends for half
term

Fri 12th STAFF INSET 10 - 4

Mon 22nd Back to school 8.15am

At this time of year, we are reminded of the Angels' message of peace and good will to the Shepherds in the hills above Bethlehem. Was this peace and good will meant only for certain people? Those, perhaps, who went to the temple every week, who observed the Ten Commandments, who lived respectable lives in the eyes of their neighbours? Is the Christmas message reserved only for Christians or was it, as the Angel says, 'to be for all men'? In this city where we meet people from so many different cultures and backgrounds every day, and in this time when we can free ourselves of all tradition and convention if we choose to, we inevitably meet things in others - the language they use, their manners, their behaviour, their values or lifestyle - that arouse our instinctive disapproval.

It is sometimes hard to reconcile ourselves to the fact that we can't control what or who will have an influence on our children; we want them to grow up in a world where they encounter the highest ideals of humanity, one of which is freedom from prejudice and open-heartedness towards their fellow men. It would be unthinkable for us to exclude, condemn or ostracise people because they are not like us, and yet, while we can hold this as an abstract ideal, it is difficult to see our children exposed to things that we think are inappropriate. Perhaps it was this dilemma that led some of us to think, "If we send our children to a Steiner school, they will be protected from ..." from what? From other people? And perhaps it is disappointing to find that this is not what happens - Steiner schools don't exclude 'other people'.

Steiner schools cherish the sanctity of childhood innocence, but they also champion the preparation of young people to meet - and to love - life as it is. We do not believe that these two things are mutually exclusive. Our curriculum, our ideals and the image we hold of every human being as a spiritual being with the potential to be noble and upright - these are the things that enable our children to approach life in the right way. We don't protect them by keeping them away from the world, but by preparing and strengthening them to meet it, in whatever form it manifests. We don't know what the future holds for them, what they will have to face, but by giving them an education that fits their developing consciousness at each stage and awakens them to the questions, discoveries and paradoxes of the world, we help them to develop the 'moral stamina' to make their own way, not *around* life, but *through* it, with courage, confidence and a feeling of responsibility.

So when the adults around them show, by example, that it is possible to live an honest, upright life side by side with all kinds of different people, even when they sometimes do terrible things, we can have hope that our children will be able to find their own way of doing just that themselves. We cannot be certain of anything, but if we make a habit of criticising others and showing our disapproval of everyone who doesn't do what we think is right - something that is so much part of our culture now that we hardly notice we are doing it - we can be fairly certain that our children will grow up believing that this is an acceptable way to feel about and behave towards other people. Then haven't we become the 'bad influence' that we wanted to protect them from?

Amanda Bell

Programme for the End of Term

You will see from your calendar that the Lower School end of term festival will take place on Thursday 17th December from 11am.

Our end of term festivals are an opportunity for parents to see some of the work the children have been doing during the term. Some of what you will see is work in progress, some is from earlier on in the term. None of it is intended to be a 'show'. Another thing to bear in mind is that we can't show you the children taking part in recall or discussions, writing, painting or drawing, so what you see here represents only a small part, and one or two aspects, of the school's curriculum. If you would like to find out more about what the children do at school and why, come to our next Education Workshop "**A Day in the Classroom**" on 30th January. (see left)

The classes will show their work in their own classrooms and parents are welcome to attend all classes' presentations. However, as usual, because space is limited, we ask that you give priority in each room to the parents of the children who are presenting work.

Presentations will begin with class 1&2 at approximately 11am and presentations will proceed in age order. We cannot predict exactly how long each presentation will take, so subsequent classes' start times are approximate.

For the sake of the children, we ask that you please:

- do not take photographs or record any part of the presentations.
- do not enter or leave the room during any presentation
- arrive in good time - LATECOMERS WILL NOT BE ADMITTED

Programme:

11.00 am - Class 1&2

11.20 am - Class 3&4

11.40 am - Class 5&6

12.00 noon - Class 7&8

12.20 - 1.30pm Refreshments and Christmas craft stall

ALL TIMINGS ARE APPROXIMATE - CLASSES MAY START THEIR PRESENTATIONS EARLIER THAN ADVERTISED

After the final presentation, children will return to their own classrooms to close the day with their teachers. You are then free to take them home.

The school will close at 1.30pm

There will be school on Friday 18th from 8.15am to 12.30pm for all classes

Lower School Advent Mornings

All parents are very welcome to join us every morning of Advent for a short - 5-10 minute - assembly in the reception area. We light the candles on the Christmas tree, have a Bible reading and sing a carol together. We start promptly at 8.25 and, sorry, but latecomers are not admitted!

A DAY IN THE CLASSROOM

"Do you really know what a wonderful opportunity opened up for your child the moment you took that step and sent her to our school? You have chosen this truly extra-ordinary education for your child, but do you know how extraordinary it really is?"

*Every term, the school offers you an opportunity to find out. If you are one of the lucky ones, you will have deepened your understanding of your child's educational experience - and at the same time enriched the life of every child (and teacher) in the school by becoming even more able to support our work together with enthusiasm and conviction - at the last Education Workshop. If not, well, you'll have another chance on **Saturday 30th January**. Don't miss out this time - we want you to know what we do."*

We are currently putting a programme together and it will be emailed to all parents and put on the school website as soon as it is ready.

Amanda Bell

AFTERNOON CARE

I have been leading afternoon care for almost a term. The children, Maria and I have settled into a lovely rhythm with 5 or 6 children attending each session.

Over the last few weeks, we've have been privileged to observe some wonderful play; Katie's trolley was used to make a hospital trolley on which three babies were wheeled down to surgery. The ironing board became the surgeon's table on which all her operating equipment was carefully laid out and next to the trolley stood two chairs, for the parents to watch the operation in progress.

It was wonderful to experience the children's rich and imaginative play. Sadly we've said goodbye to Maria who has returned to Chile, we all miss her.

Have a lovely holiday

Rebecca Firth

From The Early Years

We are coming to the end of our Michaelmas term, a term where new children have joined us, and many children grown with us. A term where the rain fell in bucket-loads, yet we spent more time outdoors than ever before, beginning each morning in our small garden. Birthdays have been celebrated and festivals have brought our groups together both indoors and outdoors. Our Martinmas lantern walk on a wild and blustery November night was an extraordinary evening when we experienced the transformation of an everyday classroom environment into a place of quiet and peaceful beauty, where awe and wonder, and just a little magic, were found amidst the lantern lights.

The morning of our Advent spiral found tree surgeons at work undertaking major pruning of the trees in West Hill's playground. After gaining permission from the 'woodcutters', the children dragged great leafy branches both into the Secret Garden to make dens and up several flights of stairs and into the kindergarten to be used in the forthcoming festival.

Not long after this, our Advent spiral was carefully laid out on the kindergarten floor. This spiral was to be walked by many groups of children and adults, each having its own mood brought by those who participated in it. Beginning with our own kindergarten children and parents, music was played by a former kindergarten child, whilst another gracefully walked Mary's pathway as we all sang and greeted her. A mood of reverence and peace prevailed throughout the evening.

The following morning, our two Parent and Child groups came together for a small festival where we made star crowns and sang songs whilst the babies and younger children walked with their parents, lighting their candles and placing them around the spiral.

Later that day, the children of our lower school came one by one and walked the spiral. In the afternoon, the younger children from West Hill came up to our 'school in the sky', and we made star crowns together. The teachers and children played our pentatonic instruments, and individually walked the spiral, lighting their candles with great care and reverence. One boy, looking around the lit candles at the end said: 'Just look at all those little fires everywhere!' and another, on leaving the room turned back and said, 'Oh, this is so beautiful'.

At the end of a long, busy day, the teachers chose to close their Faculty meeting by walking the spiral silently lit by a growing pathway of candles. We sat together with a feeling of great peace.

The beginnings of Advent spiral festival*

In his class in the first Waldorf School founded in Stuttgart, Karl Schubert asked the children to move to and draw various forms, some of which were given him by Rudolf Steiner. One such form was the involuting and outgoing spiral. This helped to activate the childrens' will and worked on their rhythmic and sensory systems. Later, Schubert incorporated the double spiral into the layout of an Advent garden in his classroom. The history of the garden came in a simplified form from Bavarian farmers and was introduced at Sonnenhof, the original Swiss curative home, by a German nurse working there between 1925 and 1928. Fir twigs and moss formed a garden on a table that was lit up by candles in apples to represent an old parable of paradise. On the first Advent Sunday of 1926, this became a formal celebration. The moss spiral was laid out on the floor leading to the middle candle. Candles in apples were carried there by individual children and after being lit, placed along the path, in the end a lit up garden vouched for paradise regained.

** excerpt from 'Something in History: Journal for Curative Education and Social Therapy Vol 4, 1986.*

A very big thank to all the parents who baked and carefully wrapped advent star biscuits which were presented at the end of the spirals to kindergarten children, parent and child group children and West Hill Early Years children

We would like to thank the Craft Group for the beautiful Advent stars that decorated the stairwell in time for the spirals, and for the wonderful Gnome hats that are loved and used in both Kindergarten rooms.

In our rooms, a gentle Advent mood has been created, and we are slowly, quietly, and intimately building up to our last festival of the year. Full details will be given separately for our Christmas festival on Thursday 17th December.

We wish you all a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

Leigha Hipkin and Katie Sharrock
On behalf of the Early Years Team



What's Happening in the Classrooms?

At the beginning of Advent some of you will have heard **Class 3&4** reciting, at our morning assemblies, the prophecies of Isaiah regarding the coming of the Messiah. This was a very apposite activity for them as we were just beginning our second and final block of Old Testament stories in the Main Lesson. The Israelites left Egypt and received the Ten Commandments under the guidance of Moses and finally came to the Promised Land, only to find that their struggles had barely begun. In the last two weeks of the block, a new kind of Israelite emerges as David takes centre stage in defiance of the old laws. He is anointed king secretly, while the old king still lives and is not only the son of another man, but the youngest son and from another tribe. He goes on to eat the hallowed bread in the temple because he is hungry and ally himself with the Israelites' sworn enemies, the Philistines, in order to take the throne from Saul, his best friend's father, effectively usurping his friend.

How is all of this justified? David's kingdom marks the beginning of Man's transition from a time when blind faith and obedience were necessary for survival, to a time when he must begin to think for himself; to do what is right through his own initiative regardless of tradition. We recognise David as a modern man - pointing the way to the future. He is also, of course, the ancestor of Jesus and it is because of this that Mary and Joseph journeyed to the 'City of David', Bethlehem, to pay their taxes and why Jesus himself was born there.

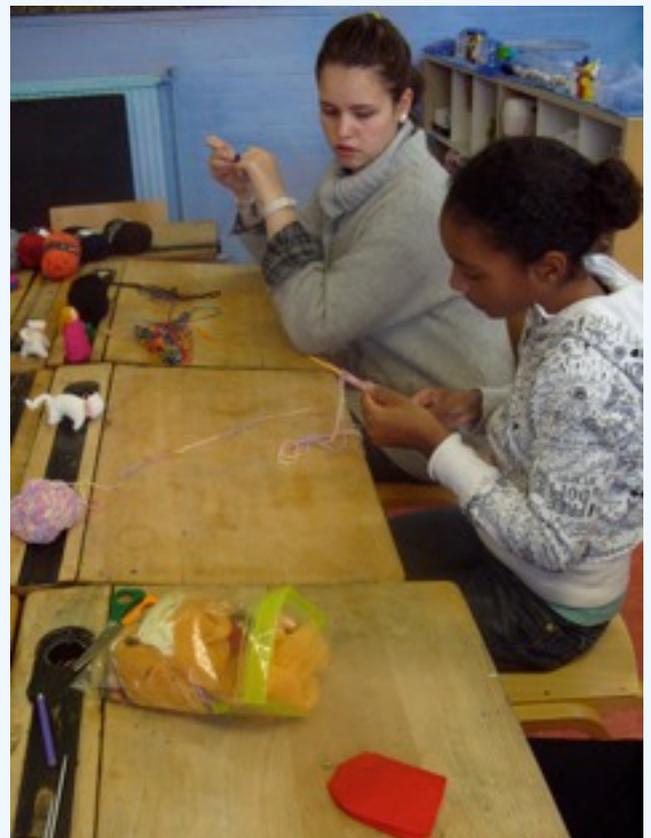
Amanda Bell

Class 5&6 have left the magnificent empire of Alexander the Great which spanned the entire known world and have now begun a main lesson on Maths, Pythagoras, and Geometry. Times tables are being rehearsed and recited individually and simple (and some not so simple) maths sums are done at speed. Circles, triangles, and quadrangles were explored through free-hand geometry with more awareness of *how* these archetypal forms are actually made than when these forms were drawn in previous form drawing lessons. With their burgeoning critical eye gazing upon their work, many children realised how amazingly difficult it is to draw a perfect circle, a straight and even square, and an accurate triangle without the use of ruler and compass. This week, however, both of these instruments will be taken in hand, to be mastered with care and attention, and put to use in making beautiful geometrical forms. These forms will lead on to a deeper understanding of the forms found in nature through a *measuring of the earth*. Why wait so long to introduce ruler and compass? Why struggle on trying to draw a circle free-hand? You may well ask. Try drawing a circle free-hand. Try to make it as perfectly round as possible and as you do, try to be aware of how you feel inside. Then you will know. As we measure with ruler and compass and use these tools for the precision they can bring, we also, one could say, take the measure of ourselves.

Brian Jacques

Class 7&8 have finished their main lesson block on the physiology of the human being, an English block titled: "Wish, Wonder and Surprise", a block of language arts focusing on the mood of language. They are now contemplating (and calculating) the five Platonic Solids. This is a development of last year's Geometry of Nature and brings us into an exploration of three dimensional geometry. The class are constructing the solids and some other besides. We are also developing our studies of algebra, combining algebra and calculation of area.

Juanna Ladaga



From the Support Teams

In every newsletter we would like to highlight the work of one support team, so everybody can get the most up-to-date information about what is going on, what to do, and where to help. So please, do not hesitate to ask and show your interest.

If you have any questions for any team which you think the whole school community would be interested in reading about in the monthly newsletters, please contact Agnes Donazy-Bloomfield at donazyagi@cintra.fsbusiness.co.uk or at the school gates or by phone.

The Story of the Cherry Tree

The leader of the Fundraising Support Team, Magda Devaris, who has been actively helping and supporting our school for many years now, answered questions about the plans, activities and achievements of the team for this academic year.

Everybody who comes into the school can see a beautiful felted cherry tree hanging on the wall at the staircase. What does this tree symbolise?

The cherry tree is a gauge of how much we have raised so far this year. Our aim is to raise £10,000 this financial year - each cherry represents £100. We have raised nearly £7000 (*we are awaiting final figures from the proceeds of the Martinmas fair which I believe was close to £4000 - once this has been confirmed more cherries will appear on the tree*). The money raised so far has been from within the school community - from table top sales - sponsored walks and the martinmas fair. We invited every family to a challenge at the beginning of the year to make it their goal to raise £100 per family. Some families have exceeded this during the sponsored walk. Another way to do this in an easy and effortless way is by shopping online: www.thegivingmachine.co.uk if you shop at Amazon, John Lewis, Tesco, Apple to name but a few or if you need to renew your house or car insurance go through this site and they will donate a percentage to a chosen charity - the St Michael Steiner School is a registered charity and already registered on this site.

What is the Fundraising team planning to do this academic year to help our cherry tree to grow?

In the New Year we aim to set up a separate committee to target selling refreshments at Wimbledon Tennis weeks, we aim to put an annual year book together which will be used to give to supporters, sponsors and friends of the St Michael Steiner School. Another project which is underway is a cookery book with recipes from our multi national community and guest chefs. We have applied for funding from the Hermes Trust for this.

What is the motivation behind that?

So far our fundraising activity has been from within our school community. We now need to reach out into the community and further afield to raise funds to secure new premises.

What activities are you planning to have this year according to your plans?

We have a calendar of events of table top sales for the rest of the school year - we intend to have some more social fundraising evenings like supper clubs and an auction of promises but we need more help with co-ordination.

How do the Fundraising team co-operate with other support teams?

Katie Sharrock is our college representative and reports back to the college representatives of the other support teams - However we would benefit from having a more formal approach from other groups - at present we channel our requests through the association meeting, and the college.

Who are the current members of the Fundraising team?

Katie Sharrock, Leila Steeds, Mihiri Lim, David Bloomfield, Camilla Barnard, Magda Devaris

How can someone become a member of the team?

Please contact Magda Devaris on mdevaris@yahoo.co.uk at the school gates or by phone.

What level of support are you looking for? -

We would welcome support from anyone who can follow through with ideas and give time to help, with co-ordination, research, fund applications, communication and presentations. We meet regularly - usually over fine food and wine - and very soon we will be testing the recipes for the St Michael Steiner School recipe book.

The Giving Machine

This is an extremely easy and simple way to raise money for the school without any additional personal cost. Simply go to thegivingmachine.com and choose the store you require and shop as normal. The shop will then donate a percentage to charity of your choice and in this case it will be to the St Michael Steiner School. There are hundreds of stores to choose from. Please remember every time you shop online from toys to car insurance and clothes to groceries every little will make a difference.

The Fundraising Group

REVIEWS

Advent workshop

Every year, December runs away with me - it's just a blur of panic and shopping. The Advent workshop got me to stop and think about what this time of the year actually means. About preparing and patient waiting and peace. We light a candle for Mary on her star path each evening, and the children just stare and stare - excited to see how the night sky will look with a new star in it.

Natalie - mother of Constance, Pearl and Walter.

"The Advent workshop was not only a lovely day out from what is otherwise a busy time of year, it was also a wonderful opportunity to learn how we can enrich our children's soul life by celebrating festivals in a beautiful, non-commercial way. Ann and Christine introduced us to the seasons of Advent, Christmas and New Year with much insight and humour and half-way through we were spoilt with an utterly delicious lunch that Leigha had lovingly prepared for us."

Birgit

Martinmas Fair

"I want to say thank you so much to all the kind people who generously donated their time, skills and effort to the silent auction. It is inspiring to feel the support and care for the school and our children that makes everyone so giving of themselves. It is much appreciated. Also thank you to all the wonderful bidders who I very much hope will enjoy their amazing prizes. (any money outstanding can be paid to me or Lara. Cheques to "St Michael Steiner School" Thank you)

Birgit

Threshold Theatre Drama Group

First of all we would like to thank all of you who sent your children to our Taster Session on November 24th; it was a great first session and wonderful to have so many people there.

We are happy to announce that we will be running the drama group (for children aged between 9 and 14) from 15.15 and 17.15 every Tuesday during term time from January 19th until the end of the school year (except for 20th April, first day of the Summer term. Summer term sessions will begin on 27th April).

We can only offer 20 places and until January 1st we are giving priority to those who came to the taster session.

From January 1st places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

We are charging £8 a session and are asking to be paid at the beginning of every half term for the whole half term.

To request a place or for further enquiries please email us on: ThresholdTheatreDG@hotmail.com

Stella Bell Ottewill & Abra Hunt

SCHOOL CDS

CDs of "Songs for Autumn & Winter" and "Songs for Spring & Summer" are now available from Lara at reception. All proceeds go to the school. £8 each, £14 for 2, £6 each for 10 or more.

Newsletter Contributions!

Thank you to all of you who have contributed to our newsletters this term.

If you have something interesting/funny/controversial/moving/profound to share, however small, please send it to me.

Amanda Bell

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

This Newsletter - as well as back issues and all future issues - is available in full colour on our website at www.stmichaelsteiner.wandsworth.sch.uk

Newsletter Contributions

The next newsletter will be distributed on Friday 15th January. Deadline for contributions is 6pm Wednesday 13th January
Email them please, to: amandabell@mac.com

Have a peaceful Christmas and a happy new year.

Community Page

Please note that the school does not endorse or recommend anything offered in the Community Pages and parents are advised to check the qualifications of practitioners or people offering services here.

ORGANIC CHILDREN'S CLOTHES

Organic Virgin Lambs Wool Vests and Long Johns,
Wool Slippers for Kindergarten,
Real Nappies and Warm Organic Merino Wool
Clothes by Disana.

Free shipping for Steiner school parents.
Enter discount code "steiner"during checkout.
<http://mynerva.co.uk>
0845 4790772

Massage treatments offered:

Classic massage back only/whole body	£40/60
Back massage + Passive stretching	£60
Passive stretching	£50
Reflexology	£50
Hot stone massage	£70
Aromatherapy	£70
Indian massage	£70
Arabian massage	£70
Mediterranean massage	£70
Oriental massage	£70
Head massage	£20
Foot massage	£30

Treatment package - book 4 of the same treatments and get one for free. **For your loved one** - give them the best present for Christmas this year !!!

Time of massage depends on the type of treatment and client needs. 30, 45, 60, 90 minutes.

You can make an appointment for your treatment on this number: Tajana (Karla's mother) 07961226957

Look in the Observer's December food magazine to see **Why porridge is the new power breakfast**: Nick and Camilla Barnard's company, Rude Health, has a wonderful paragraph in this great article that can be found at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/dec/06/porridge-breakfast>

A second excellent article in the same magazine entitled: **Wake up and smell the biodynamic coffee**, gives an in depth study of biodynamic coffee growing in Brazil. Not only is the coffee wonderful, but also there are social and financial benefits to this form of agriculture. It can be found at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/dec/06/biodynamic-coffee-in-brazil>

Leigha Hipkin