

The St Michael Steiner School

NEWSLETTER

15th June 2012

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We have the Keys!



OPEN DAYS AT HANWORTH PARK

We had an amazing turnout at the last Open Day at our new site in Hanworth Park in May. The weather was perfect and there was a buzz of excitement about the news that we are moving into the area. We had many conversations with parents who were on the brink of making a life-changing decision about their children's education. Much of the enthusiasm about - and advocacy of - Steiner education came from members of the existing school community, so thank you. Your personal recommendations, your testimonials and your children are absolutely the best advertisement for our school.

Tomorrow, Saturday 16th June, will be our second Open Day in the new building, and we hope to have another successful day. The final one this term is on 7th July. Please come along between 11am and 2pm.

'Teens and Screens' - London 2012 Part 2

Since the school was founded in 2001, our children's lives have been transformed by electronic technology. Eleven years ago, television was the burning issue, and we urged parents to keep their children away from that box in the living room. Now, screens are in people's pockets (in their hands!), on the backs of car seats, clipped to buggies, in shops and waiting rooms, everywhere we go, the world is presented to us through screens. I was particularly struck by this at an exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci's inventions. The room was full of models and notebooks, but there were also three 'interactive' screens in the room with a group of school children, every single one, glued to them. The real thing was there in front of them, and yet they preferred to look at it through a screen.

Why? What does the screen do? First, it renders things in two dimensions, so that you only see what it shows you and you don't have to really look yourself. (This is equally true of 3D images; you can't actually look at them from any other point of view - it's an illusion.) Secondly, what appears on the screen is carefully designed to keep your attention by constantly switching from one arresting image to another, accompanied by dynamic sounds or music, all contrived to stop you switching off - to keep you hooked. (This happens in all media now - I recently heard a Radio 4 Daily Service where the blessing was given, accompanied by guitar music!) Then there's the authority of the screen; it lends everything a certain veracity; some part of you believes that what it tells you is more reliable than what you can discern for yourself, so that you eventually stop *trying* to discern anything for yourself. Why bother?

Skillfully and comprehensively, the screen can entertain, mesmerise, delude, seduce and sedate our children. (I say 'can' because I don't think this is the whole picture. There is a new world of cultural and social interaction being born through the internet that I am not ready to condemn at this point. And I say 'our children' because, although I really mean 'us', whereas we adults have, at least, the *possibility* of becoming aware of how these things work on us, and of using them rather than letting them use us, children do not have this possibility. They cannot help but be overwhelmed.)

Many unforeseen (or perhaps seen but disregarded) problems are arising from our struggle to come to terms with the constant stream of technological wizardry that is thrust at us. As we hungrily consume Playstation and Wii, the space in our lives for developing the finer aesthetic senses through reading, writing, drawing and making things is being squeezed out. The internet has the potential to bring

the world - the culture of the world included - to us, in a certain way, but that's part of the problem - that it is brought to us and shown to us and we are told how to see it and what to think about it; no effort is required on our part and it makes us lazy. The i-Pad is right there all the time, all we have to do is touch it and it comes to life. We all know that, whatever we plan to use it for, however wonderful a tool it may be, the temptation is always to check your Facebook page first. Someone has posted a funny link so you watch a few Youtube clips and google somebody, and before you know it, hours have gone by. We are all distracted by what's easy and entertaining, but as adults, we have a virtually screen-free, activity-filled childhood behind us. Our children don't have this foundation, and they are rapidly losing a connection with nature, with their own bodies and with their culture - with the art, music and literature that has shaped the world. When everything comes ready-made, most children never see skilled craftsmen at work - never come to appreciate what amazing things the human hand and eye and mind can do - and never imagine that they might be able to do those things themselves. There is a real danger that, instead of creative human beings, they may become simply passive consumers. The great figures of history whose ideas and deeds changed the world, who stand as examples of human striving and connect one generation with the next are being replaced with mutant super-heroes, 'celebrities' (once quoted to me as the ugliest word in the English language), people from 'reality' TV shows and comic figures. If our children are not to take these fictional caricatures as their only role models, if the culture of centuries is not to be erased from people's consciousness in a decade, an appreciation and understanding of all this, and why it matters, must permeate our children's education more than ever before.

So we have given up the battle against TV and have no hope of winning, and perhaps no wish to take up, the battle against electronic technology. Yet we see what it is doing to our children; the dependence, the inertia, the movement and co-ordination problems, the inability to concentrate, the lack of resourcefulness, the inability to interact properly with other people, the disappearance of even simple practical skills like cutting with scissors or changing a light bulb. Can we only watch as the next generation sleepwalks into The Matrix? No! We have to make them want to take the red pill! - to engage with this illusory, seductive world, *which will be a huge part of their lives no matter what*, but also to know, understand, love and be inspired by the real world and real people. They have to be able to stand back from all of their experiences and know - and *care* - what's real and what isn't; what's their own idea or feeling and what's someone else's; what they have created and what has been created for them; the difference between a real relationship and a Facebook friend.

This is an increasingly difficult and lifelong challenge for all of us, doubly hard because it's all new for us as well as for our children. We are not preparing them for something we know about, we are going through it together and the children are rushing ahead into things we have no idea about. So we can't teach them about those things - in fact we have to learn about them from the children - but we are older and we can see these things in the context of greater possibilities for human experience. As their teachers, we can give them the opportunity to begin the process of developing independent thinking and independent action so that they can enter fully into the life of the world they have been born into, no matter how it turns out, without losing themselves in it.

This has always been our aim for The St Michael High School, but it has become clear that the work has to start long before Class 9. In a world where it is normal to be driven everywhere, eat easily digestible food prepared by someone else, stay 'safe' in our houses all the time and not take any risks, children in Class 1 - in Kindergarten - need as many opportunities as we can give them to engage with the world, with other people, to work with their hands, to use their limbs to run and climb, jump and balance, to throw and catch, to test their strength, to work things out for themselves, practically, socially and intellectually, *to make mistakes from which they can learn*. It is not possible, I think, to overstate the importance of these simple, human experiences, of practical work and movement in our children's education now. And since we already have the people who understand the need for it, and we will soon have the space to do it, it is this aspect of the curriculum, above all, that we plan to develop in the school's next incarnation.

The great task we face as teachers is to bring these balancing - ameliorating - forces in such a way that they will be taken up with enthusiasm. The competition for our students' attention has become terrifyingly fierce, but this is our work and we must not shrink from it. A tepid application of the so-called 'Waldorf Curriculum' will not do the job, however much we say it will. We have to ask ourselves what our children need, provide it as far as we can, and watch to see if we got it right. This process of constant renewal based on what is actually needed is absolutely essential now. The Waldorf Curriculum was always meant to be worked with in this way, so that it should not be possible to define what Waldorf practice is. Waldorf practice is anything we think it should be, provided we have based it on a sound understanding of what a human being is and what he needs. Every year, every day, every lesson is a new battle and we must arm ourselves with weapons equal to the task: we must challenge our students' minds, feelings and bodies, inspire them to be creative and enquiring, make

them think about things in many different ways, bring them things that will fill them with wonder, amazement, surprise, pity, admiration, revulsion, horror - *move* them, make them want to *do* something. Otherwise the things our critics say about us - that we are old fashioned, dogmatic and not serious about education - will be true.

Amanda Bell



From The Early Years

Spring goeth all in white
Crowned with milk-white may:
In fleecy flocks of light
O'er heaven the white clouds stray.

White butterflies in the air;
White daisies prank the ground;
The cherry and the hoary pear
Scatter their snow around

By Robert Bridges

The festival of Whitsun celebrates the individual within the community and our connection to nature. In the kindergarten we celebrate the blossoming of spring flowers such as May, Hawthorn or Lilac. On both sites we celebrated by making dove crowns to wear, a feast of white foods, a story about a shy daisy and the lighting of a candle for each child and teacher in the kindergarten.



In Leigha and Rebecca's kindergartens we are saying farewell to:
Enrico and his family who are heading home to Italy. We wish him well as he returns to the Steiner kindergarten he attended before he moved to London.

Chloe is moving to Wimbledon House School. We hope she will be very happy in her new school.

Both families will be greatly missed.

Rebecca
For the Early Years



What's happening away from the Classrooms?



Pictures from Class 7&8's trip to Norway before half term.



Class 7&8 are presenting Macbeth at Rudolf Steiner House, 35 Park Road, London NW1 6XT on Wednesday July 4th at 7pm. On Monday 9th July, starting at 6:30pm, the class will be presenting their Class 8 Projects. You are warmly invited to both of these events, but due to the nature of the play, it is not suitable for children below Class 3.

The Three Peaks Challenge

You must already have heard about our exciting fundraising event this year, the **'Three Peaks Challenge'**. This year's event involves climbing the three highest mountains in the UK within 24 Hours and will be attempted on the 30th of June 2012.

The Mountains are:

Ben Nevis (Scotland) 4,408ft

Scafell Pike (England) 3,210ft

Mount Snowdon (Wales) 3,560ft

That is a total of 1224 miles, 25 hours driving - in one weekend!!!

Height courageous hikers, including, Raman Khosla (Lila's Dad from Class 1), George Buckley and Didier Delvaux.

Drivers / support team: Shalu Khosla (Lila's mum) and Viva Aikins (Matthias's mum)

Naturally, all proceeds will go directly to the School and help raise funds for our new premises as funds are urgently needed to support this expansion especially in the following areas: to help fund the move; to support a school bus; for renovation work on the school building and new equipment and materials for our older classes.

Please Sponsor this amazing challenge by going to the link below:

<http://www.justgiving.com/3peaks4stmichaelsteinerschool>

Please forward this onto all your family and friends and thank you for helping us in making a difference.

Thank you.
Lara Koppers
Class 2 Teacher
On behalf of the fundraising team

Dates for Your Diary

June

Sat 16 10am – 12.30pm
Open Day
Fri 22 10am - 1.30pm
St John's Festival at
Dulwich Scout Centre
Thu 28 7 – 8.30pm
Kindergarten Social
Evening

July

Tue 10 11am – 12.30pm
End of Term Festival
No Afternoon Care
Wed 11 8.15 / 8.30am
Kindergarten Family
Festival
12:30pm
TERM ENDS FOR ALL
CLASSES

A note about the use of the school's name and Logo

We very much appreciate the fundraising efforts that are going on in the school and want to support them wherever we can. However, please note that, because we are a school and a charity with clearly stated vision and aims, and because we are part of a wider movement that regulates use of the name 'Steiner Waldorf', the school's name and logo must not be used by anyone without express permission from the College. Thank you for your co-operation and understanding.

Education News Clippings

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship office sends out regular media clippings about education issues to anyone who is interested. Some of them are controversial and not all of them are complimentary about Steiner education, but we're all grown up aren't we? So if you are interested and not scared of a little criticism, email Jasmin at forjasmin@googlemail.com and she will forward them to you.

Accommodation needed for conference

The school is hosting three 'Class Preparation Conferences' on behalf of The SWSF on Saturday 23rd June. Some of the attending teachers are looking for overnight accommodation for the night of Friday 22nd. Please contact me if you can help.

Amanda amandabell@mac.com

Study Group

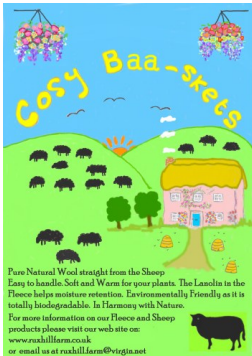
The study group with Philip Martyn is going strong, every Wednesday morning from about 8:40. Speak to Andrea if you would like to join, or just come along. Please note that his group is just for adults.

Newsletter Contributions

The next newsletter will be distributed on Friday 6th July. Deadline for contributions is 6pm Wednesday 4th July. We are always keen to publish contributions from parents in the newsletter. If you have something interesting/funny/controversial/moving/profound to share, however small, please send it to me. Email please, to: amandabell@mac.com

Community Section

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



Cosy Baa-skets Wool is Pure Natural Wool straight from our flock of Black Welsh Mountain Sheep. The Wool is easy to handle, warm for your plants and we feel the Lanolin in the Wool helps with water retention. Wool is a natural product being Environmentally Friendly, Totally biodegradable, in Harmony with Nature. We find it wonderful for lining Hanging Baskets, Mangers and any other similar plant containers.



For more information you can visit our website: www.ruxhillfarm@btinternet.com
Or contact us direct, where we will be only too happy to hear from you.

Email: ruxhillfarm@btinternet.com

01409-281457 (Shebbear Devon)

HANDMADE NATURAL SOAP AVAILABLE

Lavender

Rose Geranium

Clary Sage and Lemongrass

Orange Geranium

Price: £3 each or two for £5

Please contact Brian Jacques
(Class 7&8 teacher)

07759917112

Dear parents,
should you be interested in:

- French tutoring (children and adults)
- babysitting

then I am the person you are looking for!

Please feel free to email me for details

leroumilie@yahoo.fr

Mlle Leroux

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Hi,

I write you from Albacete, Spain, where a group of families are trying to start a Waldorf school.

I'm looking for a girl related to waldorf pedagogy who wants to become our next summer au pair (a former student, training as a teacher, etc) and wants to learn or improve her spanish and to live in Spain for a while.

We need her for 2'5 months, july to mid september. We are a young couple, with two children, twins, boy and girl. They are three years and a half. I am a youth worker and my husband is a helicopter pilot.

Albacete is a medium sized town with all amenities 2 hours far from Madrid or Valencia. We live in a semi detached house in a new residential neighborhood very close to the city center, with swimming pool and near sports facilities.

We believe this experience can be enriching and enjoyable for everyone. It's our first time, so we are a bit nervous but we'll try to do our best, always with the help and the understanding of everyone.

Please if you know someone interested please put her in contact with us.

Many thanks for your help.

Carmen Gomez

gatitayumb@hotmail.com

Search for a babysitter job

My name is Jil Sauer, I am from Germany (near by Karlsruhe) and I am looking for a babysitter job in my summer holidays for two or three weeks (between 26.07 and 07.09 2012).

I am 18 years old and I am visiting the Freie Waldorfschule in Rastatt. I have a driving license and I really like the handling with children. If you are interested and want to ask me some questions you can contact me on Jil.Sauer@web.de

I am looking forward to your response!

Jil

DOUBLE BEDROOM IN EARLSFIED (short term let)

If you would like to rent a room in our place for short or longer periods from now until October please give me a call on 07906153180. My name is Tania and my daughter is Liliflor in class 4.

Many thanks

Tania