



The St Michael Steiner School NEWSLETTER



14th October 2011
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Dates for Your Diary

OCTOBER

Sun 16: 10:30am Sponsored Bike ride in Richmond Park

Thu 20: 12.30/3pm SCHOOL ENDS FOR HALF-TERM

NOVEMBER

Sat 5: 9.30 to 12.30 Parents Workday (school DIY)

Fri 11: 4.30 to 6pm Martinmas Lantern Walk

Sat 19: 11am to 4pm Advent Fair

Fri 25: 9:15 to 11:45am Simplicity Parenting Workshop Course 1

Fri 25: 1:30 to 3:30pm A Gentle Beginning (Parent and Infant Support group)

Sun 27: 1st Sunday of Advent

Mon 28: Early evening: Advent Spiral (Kindergarten)

DECEMBER

Sat 3: 10am to 12.30pm Open Day

Thu 8: 7 to 8:30pm Growing Down and Waking Up: A course for parents in child development: Part II

Thu 15: 11 to 12.30pm End of Term Festival (TBC) (No Afternoon Care)

Fri 16: 8.15/8.30am Kindergarten Family Festival

Fri 16 : 12.30pm END OF TERM FOR ALL CLASSES

A leaf floating, drifting, hanging in space, magically twirling, faster and faster, then slowly resting, mysteriously suspended in space. Moved by the wind into a patch of sunlight, a gossamer silk thread shines rainbow bright, stretched out by the weight of the leaf and the breath of the wind. Whilst driving the other day, my eyes glimpsed a leaf so suspended from a roadside tree, and inwardly I gave thanks for the creativity and wonder of nature, the extraordinarily endless possibilities of random beauty. My mind thought back to the first time I had seen such a leaf as a child, when only on closer inspection had I spotted the spiders' silken thread.

In that moment, my mind turned to our children and how, in the kindergarten, we restrain from conceptualising and analysis and allow a little mystery and wonder to linger. In their own time children find their truths, appropriate and right for themselves at their age and stage of development. 'Well, I wonder?' can be the right answer to so many questions. When walking through the forest last week, we heard a tapping noise. "Is it a woodpecker?" asked one child. When we rounded the corner and found a stone mason carving letters with a hammer and chisel on a large stone plinth, the same child asked him: "Are you a woodpecker?"

I reflected later on the strength of parents who entrust their children's education to our school in these challenging times. Our hurried world where questions are answered at the touch of a button destroys the possibility of something new, different, or original emerging. However, text book or internet learning has its drawbacks, as we heard this week, even the most established laws of physics are open to question and change. How wonderful to be a child in these exciting times!

As parents, let's nourish the ground of our own inspiration, keeping our minds free from concepts, open to all possibilities and allow a little magic to touch us, as it does our children. As William Blake said:

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.*

Katie Sharrock

What's happening in the Classrooms?

Class 3&4 have recently returned from a week of outdoor classroom activities, where they have been learning about how to create an indoors! The block, on the theme of shelter and housebuilding, has come to an end and the children have built their own shelters, a cordwall, learned the art of hurdling and built an earth oven. They also learned about how our shelters are connected to our environments and how our skills develop out of the need to combine these factors together. This has been a wonderful start to the year, and also included harvesting, cooking, knot-making, learning to track animals and also how to use our senses to know our environment better. The class also observed the shelter given to our bodies once we have passed away. As the Sustainability Centre also houses an ecological cemetery, the children were able to observe a real grave being dug and some children also stood inside! What a Michaelmas experience of courage for them all! The final part of this block, though of course a block never truly ends, was a field trip to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum.

Edwin Ladaga



What's happening in the Classrooms?

Class 7&8 began the new school year by learning about the great Renaissance artists, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael, and of the times in which they lived. Martin Luther and the Reformation soon swept across northern Europe whilst art, science, and the discovery of new lands continued to occupy southern Europe. Meanwhile, the Tudor family in England claimed the monarchy, bringing an end to the War of the Roses, and eventually setting Henry VIII on the throne. Elizabeth I, Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, and William Shakespeare were soon to be prominent figures in English history and were learned about as well.

More recently, the class has had Physics. We studied intervals, resonance, reflections, and the boiling and freezing points of different liquids. One of the highlights was working with dry ice which can also be used to make delicious ice cream!

The class has been growing since the start of the term and now has 12 pupils.

Brian Jacques

WOW Day - In Class 2 we would like to raise money for WOW (Waldorf One World) day by preparing lunch for the school on Wednesday 19th October. Our menu is: Pasta with Pesto sauce and a salad (optional cheese available) and for dessert we will have an Apple Crumble (cream optional). All proceeds will go to the chosen WOW charity.



In the classroom, the first weeks of school were good fun without any desks and we managed to do lots of form drawing on the

floor in preparation for cursive writing (see picture). The children have been hearing more of the story of the 'King of Ireland's Son' who is currently on a quest to find his bride, the youngest daughter of the Enchanter of the Black Backlands, who was taken away by the King of the Land of Mist. They have written parts of the story themselves and there has been some great discussion about it too.

For Michaelmas we made our own conker dragons and then we took them out for a good fly (see other picture). It was loads of fun and the playground was full of different coloured dragons flying through the air.

At the moment we are working with numbers and after a hard slog in Class 1, Class 2 is easy in comparison. Everyone is very excited to get going on their sums every morning. Let's hope the enthusiasm for maths continues.

Lara Kupperts

What's happening in the Classrooms?

Music

We have had a busy and productive start to the year in the music lessons. Class 5/6 dived straight in with some beautiful singing. They developed this song further by adding their own verses which they wrote in groups. They produced a great song story about the fate of a ship sailing on the open sea. As well as this they prepared and performed a Gavotte in two parts for instrumental group by Handel, they performed this to class 7/8 in their joint orchestra class. Class 7/8 meanwhile learnt a Scottish folk song as a class and have learnt how to analyse a piece of music, looking at the different clues to interpretation we can find in the score. Class 3/4 have been opening up their listening even further by finding objects in the room using their ears and we have been enjoying singing a song in the minor. Recently they were each given a music book into which they have notated the song they have learnt.

Daniel Davies

The topic in **Class 5&6** is Physics. We started our study of sound with 10 minutes spent silently listening to what was going on around us. The sounds of people breathing, doors opening and closing, the voices of children in other classrooms, concrete being smashed on the building site, planes passing every minute or so, 'the sound of the air', things we don't usually notice, perhaps because we are making quite a lot of noise ourselves, but also because, in order to hear something, you sometimes have to listen, and the two things are not mutually inclusive. We then listened to many musical and non-musical sounds and looked at how we can identify them, what affects their volume, pitch and quality; how much we can tell about something by just listening to it. We worked at finding words to describe sounds and wrote a poem in the style of Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself' called (after a line from his poem) 'Now I will do Nothing but Listen'.

Now I will do nothing but listen: The low moan of cars on the road. The mysterious whisper of wind in the trees. The irritating squeak of the radiator. The forever banging of doors. The happy chatter of children. The restless shifting of chairs. The soft scratching of pens on paper.....

Finally, we demonstrated the formative character of sound using the Chladni plate:



This is one of the forms that appeared when we scattered sand on the plate and 'played' it with a violin bow.

The next topic is 'Light', followed by 'Heat'.

Amanda Bell

The St Michael High School

When I woke up to the news of the death of Steve Jobs last week - like many millions of other people, via a piece of technology produced by him - I felt a great sense of loss; that the world had lost a very special person and would be a different place because of it.

When anyone dies, I think the order of the world is disturbed and everyone has to shift his position just a little. So we are constantly readjusting and shifting in our seats, but when a great person dies, that effect is magnified a thousandfold and can be experienced consciously by people who never met him, but whose lives have been affected profoundly by what he did. Whether you are a fan or not, this is why there is a sea of flowers and bitten apples outside the Apple store in Regent street.

That evening, I watched again Steve Jobs' speech to the graduates at Stanford University in 2005. He had recently been diagnosed with cancer and he spoke about death and it's essential role in clearing away the old to make way for the new. It's part of life, like sweeping up the autumn leaves. So why the sense of loss? Why do I mourn the loss of a special person if he is just making way for new special people? I think it's that I fear, perhaps irrationally, that there may not be many new special people - that our education systems, worldwide, may be eliminating the possibility of special people emerging; that this may actually be it's aim: to make everyone ordinary by stifling the extraordinary.

I have written before about how and why I think this is being done*, but even more than the imposition of the National Curriculum as the standard for education in this country, the idea that any difference in the way our children learn or behave is 'abnormal' and therefore pathological, eliciting a slew of labels and requiring therapy to bring them into line with everyone else, reinforces the picture of uniformity in the population as the ultimate desirable state. Most of us would not agree that it is, and yet 99% of the population continues to send it's children

into a system that promotes this idea. Why? Because 99% of people do it, it's normal and as long as we are the same as everyone else, we'll be safe. 99% of people have decided, consciously or unconsciously, to play it safe rather than give their children the opportunity to be extraordinary.

Watching Steve Jobs' speech again and hearing his life story has renewed my conviction that there is an urgent need for us to look at education in a different way. It has to provide our children with the opportunity to do, become, not something, but *anything*. We will not achieve this by preparing them for what we think will be their future - by making plans for them based on what we expect or wish for them, or on what exists now. The reality is, the world is changing faster than ever and we cannot know what lies ahead. So we have to prepare them for *everything*.

Of course I'm not suggesting we can teach them everything, but we can kindle their *interest* in everything. We can create a culture in our homes and classrooms where everything and anything is interesting; cultivate the habit of approaching everything first with interest; of listening and observing with an open mind. We can pick up on our children's own genuine interest whenever and wherever it arises; show them what interests us; tell them stories of inspiring people who made a difference in the world; light little fires here and there and then stand back and let them fan the flames of whatever has caught their imagination until it becomes a torch that they can carry through life to illuminate the world around them.

All this we can and must do, and our decision that the St Michael High School will not prepare it's pupils for national standardised examinations comes from our conviction that we must not limit their future, but must be free to introduce them to a much wider and more wonderful world than can ever exist in a GCSE text book.

The St Michael High School

It may seem contradictory to say that by not giving them a passport to university, we are giving them more opportunities in life. But that really is what we are doing. This is about education, not qualification. The quality of education is inevitably and severely compromised by teaching to, and preparing for, these examinations. Without them, education can be as rich, subtle, flexible, spontaneous, exciting and alive as the people - teachers and students - involved in it. We want that for our students.

Our responsibility in developing The St Michael High School is to make sure that this vision continues to live in the school and to ensure that the people who come to work with our students are inspiring, skillful, creative, enthusiasts who know and love what they teach, but, above all, that they are interested in the world. This is where we are in the process - looking for and, in some cases, already finding those people.

A final word from Steve Jobs:

"You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."

Amanda Bell

* See The St Michael Steiner School Prospectus

Steve Jobs' Stanford Address:

<http://news.stanford.edu/news/2005/june15/jobs-061505.html>

Upper School Meeting 22nd September

On Thursday, 22nd September, about 25 people gathered for our latest upper school meeting. We invited two guests: Josie Alwyn who taught English at Michael Hall for many years, and Roy Allen, maths and science teacher at Ringwood Waldorf School. Josie and Roy characterised the developmental stage of Class 9 students and then demonstrated how different subjects supported them. The richness of the main lesson subjects was apparent, but also the compromises that would have to be made if running an exam-based curriculum as well. There was some discussion about the progress so far and the anticipated further development of the European Diploma. This is being coordinated by the Crossfields Institute with support from Edexcel, to accredit the Steiner upper school curriculum on a parity with Level 2 (GCSE level) and Level 3 (A Levels). Three schools will be piloting this Diploma beginning in September 2012, with the view to having it fully launched by 2014.

By the end of the meeting, the mood was positive and supportive of our plans to provide a full Steiner upper school curriculum without compromising it by offering GCSE's as well.

We are now accepting applications for Class 9 to start in September 2012. Our minimum number to make it a viable class is 15. From the interest expressed so far, and at our recent Open Day, this seems easily achievable and we may need to start a waiting list!

It seems the time is right for a long-awaited Steiner upper school in London to open.

Brian Jacques

From The Early Years

We have enjoyed a busy month in the Kindergartens, celebrating Harvest and Michaelmas with the children and we've started our Forest Fridays again. Through the late September days, the kindergarten children have practiced threshing and grinding grain in our stone grinder to make flour, a process echoed in ring time songs such as 'Blow Wind Blow', and our children have also heard how vegetables are grown and harvested through stories including The Enormous Turnip and The Pesky Thresher. In this way, the children absorb the natural cycle of sowing, growing and harvesting, and enjoy the fruits of this work through eating their fresh baked bread and soup.

Last Friday, we put our Michaelmas Dragon loaves in a forest clearing on Wimbledon Common. We sat amongst the autumn leaves and shared the fresh bread. Our Michaelmas story tells of a beautiful land laid to waste by a fearsome dragon, but with the help of sun and heavenly iron sent down to earth by Michael, the land once again becomes fertile and the people grow their crops. Michael tells the farmers to harvest their grain and bake a loaf of bread: "Each slice which is cut in friendship will warm your hearts, and each slice which is eaten will give strength and power to overcome the dragon." We did enjoy that bread, the children sat happy and contented, whilst the autumn leaves drifted down amongst us. The simple act of sharing food that has been prepared together warms the heart and mind, a feeling of community gives us all strength to help us as the lightness of summer fades and evenings draw in.

The Harvest Wheatsheaf

Make a simple bread dough with 650g flour, 400ml water, pinch salt, 2 tsp dried fast acting yeast, a spoonful of honey.

- Take around a half and form a wheatsheaf shape on a greased baking sheet, around 1-2cm thick. Prick with a fork and brush with water.
- Divide remaining dough in half. Divide one half into around twenty pieces. Roll each into a stalk, lay on lower part of shape. Twist together 3 strands to make a band to tie around all the other stalks, tuck ends underneath.
- Divide remaining dough into around fifty pieces. Roll each into a fat sausage shape, with scissors snip into an ear of corn shape. Lay first row near top of stalks with some drooping down, lay second row around top of dough. Lay third row along middle, and then fill in gaps with remaining heads.
- Make last piece of dough into mouse and place somewhere around the wheatsheaf.
- Cover with a damp cloth and leave to rise for around an hour, then carefully brush entire wheat sheaf with egg or milk glaze. Bake in a hot oven at 220 (200 fan) for about 20 minutes or so.

Blow wind blow, and go mill, go,
That the miller may grind his corn.
Then the baker may take it, and into bread make it,
And bring us a loaf in the morn.

When the wind blows, then the mill goes,
When the wind stops, then the mill stops.
Clickety clackety, clickety clackety, clickety clackety, clickety clack.

Katie Sharrock

WOW Day – Waldorf One World 3rd October 2011

What began as a cake sale, grew into a lunch time garden fete complete with cakes, fruit punch, childrens' activities, bunting and glorious sunshine.

Thank you to everybody who baked, helped out on the day and came and took part in our first social gathering at our Centre For Early Childhood.

We made a total of £136.91 which will be sent to 'De Freunde', the organisers of W.O.W. to go towards funding their most urgent projects.

For more information about these projects, please log onto www.wowday.eu

Once again many thanks,

Leigha Hipkin on behalf of the Early Years Team

EURYTHMY ADULT CLASS

Dear parents and friends of St Michael's,

Dr. Steiner says about Waldorf schools and Eurythmy that if there was only one subject that had to be compulsory, it should be eurythmy. I am not sure we can begin to fathom the depth of what he meant when he said such a thing but it makes me realise there is so much more to understand than we do at present and just maybe this misunderstood treasure is really Gold in our hands which we simply haven't recognised.

To help us in this direction, I would like to really enliven eurythmy in our school by offering a eurythmy class for adults, which we are lucky enough to be able to organise on a Friday morning.

The reason for this is first for you as parents to experience a little of what your children are living in their eurythmy life, and also to invite you on a journey of discovery which can help you accompany your child through their difficulties with more understanding when they meet them. With more understanding on your part, the children feel more supported and when they feel more supported they are freer in their being to blossom further.

If any of you are interested and are able, then please do come forward and sign the list at reception so we can begin to take this project forward.

I very much look forward to meeting many of you and also of seeing you through the course of our time together at St Michael's.

Warm regards,

Michele Hunter

Warm Welcome to All

EURYTHMY ADULT CLASS at St Michael's

**Friday mornings from 9.00 to 10.00 am
or 10.00 to 11.00 am**

Time and fee to be confirmed...

We would like to start as soon as we have enough participants! So, please be part of it and embrace this wonderful offer! Andrea

Study Group

The study group with Philip Martyn is now going strong, every Wednesday morning from about 8:40. Speak to Andrea if you would like to join.

Newsletter Contributions

The next newsletter will be distributed on Friday 11th November. Deadline for contributions is 6pm Wednesday 9th November. 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.

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.

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

Position Wanted: Childcare / Nanny

Maria, our new volunteer in the kindergarten, is seeking employment in childcare/nanny in the afternoons and evenings from 12.30pm most days.

Maria has a degree in Early Years Education from Lisbon, and is already a real asset to our team. Practical, warm, hardworking and professional, she has first aid training and loves being with the children. She also speaks Portuguese, English, Spanish and Italian.

Please contact Maria by email on

mlg_costa@hotmail.com or telephone: 07866 819024, or see her in the kindergarten.

La Source offers holidays and retreats that are very much in keeping with the Steiner philosophy. This New Year we are running a low budget 'grass roots' ski holiday in Samoens, 1 hour from Geneva in the Grand Massif ski area. Before we start to advertise it to the public, we would like to open it to all Steiner Families and Friends. If anyone books from your school, we will offer 5% to your school. We hope you can advertise this opportunity to all your families in your weekly magazine.

Apart from being a bargain ski holiday with all transport from Geneva and wholesome organic meals provided (even picnics on the mountain), it is great fun for beginners and experts alike. The free apres ski consists of yoga and dance, and no-impact winter outdoor skills. One night we walk across the snowy fields in snow shoes for fondu in a yurt!

There are 25 places available.

The cost is £590 adults / £490 children from 4 to 16.

New Year Week: Wednesday 28th Dec- Wednesday 4th Jan, 2012

More info can be found here: <http://www.greenadventureretreats.com/winter-holidays-3/the-ski-holiday/>

**We look forward to hearing from you,
Saskia Anley-McCallum**

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YURT CAMPING in SOMERSET

Come and stay in our beautiful handmade yurt on our small holding which is farmed using Biodynamic principles.. The yurt sleeps up to 4 people plus room for a cot. You will have exclusive use of your own bathroom complete with log burner to heat your water. Surrounded by lovely countryside, there are endless adventures waiting to happen both on the farm and in the woodlands, valley, fields and (hidden) lakes waiting to be discovered!

Other great stuff:

hens, pigs and sheep to get friendly with!
a homemade clay oven to make pizza, bread or cakes in!
fresh homegrown organic fruit and veg to buy on site!
plus our very own meat to buy including yummy bacon and sausages for your breakfast!
Cosy yurt includes log burner, linen, crockery, utensils and much more!
play area for the kids (as well as all the open countryside!)
45mins from M4 and M5, close to Bath , Wells, the Mendip Hills, Glastonbury, Cheddar, Wookey Hole, numerous National Trust properties and so much more....!

Available for 7 nights Saturday – Saturday during school holidays £350

Dates for 7 nights: 31st March 2012 – 21st April 2012

14th July 2012 - 9th Sept 2012

Available term time for 3 night breaks £180

Dates for 3 night breaks : 22nd April 2012 – 13th July 2012

10th Sept 2012 – autumn half term 2012

We are a family with children at a Steiner School (The Meadow Steiner School, Bruton) so we know how expensive holidays can be.. because of this we are aiming to provide affordable holidays to all especially during school holidays x

For more info call Helen Brocklehurst on 07863 295528 or email helenbrock@rocketmail.com