

The St Michael Steiner School

NEWSLETTER

12th June 2009

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Dates for Your Diary

June

Sat 13th Open day 10 - 12.30pm

Mon 15th Class 1 Parents' evening 7-8.30

Wed 17th Kindergarten Parents' evening
7-8.30pm

Fri 19th St John's festival for whole school

Wed 24th Class 4&5 leave for Olympic
camp at Michael Hall

Thur 25th Class 2&3 visit to Wimbledon
Windmill

Thur 25th 12.30 - 1.30 Talk by Sally
Schweitzer on creative discipline for
children under 7.

Sat 27th Olympic Games 7.30am - 1pm
Class 4&5 return from camp

Tue 30th Class 2&3 leave for farm camp

July

Fri 3rd Class 2&3 return from farm

Mon 6th Early Years parents' and staff
social evening 7-8.30pm

Sun 5th Sponsored walk

Thur 9th End of term festivals:
Kindergartens 9am
Lower School 11am

Fri 10th END OF TERM 12.30 for all

St John's Festival

St John's day, also Midsummer Day and not to be confused with the summer solstice, falls on 24th June, and looks across the year at its reflection, Christmas Eve, signalling the turning of the year. On Friday 19th June, we will be celebrating the festival of St John, as we have done for the last seven years, at The South London Scout Centre in Dulwich.

Some of the children from classes 4,5 6&7 will be camping overnight with their teachers and will leave school at lunch time on Thursday 18th. Everyone else is invited to join them at 10.30 on the Friday morning.

We will build a fire, there will be various crafts and activities and then at noon, we will come together to jump over the fire one by one. Fire jumping is an ancient midsummer ritual that marks the crossing from one side of the year to the other and still takes place in some countries in northern Europe. We have been doing it for seven years now - without a single mishap, I should add!

The day will end with a picnic for the whole school, to finish no later than 2pm. Further details will follow.



TERM DATES 2009 - 2010

Michaelmas Term 2009

INSET Tuesday 1st and Wednesday 2nd September
Term starts Thursday 3rd September
Half term week 26 – 30 October
INSET Monday 2nd November
Term ends Friday 18th December

Winter term 2010

INSET Monday 11th January
Term starts Tuesday 12th January
INSET Friday 12th February
Half term week 15 – 19 February
Term ends Friday 26th March

Summer Term 2010

INSET Monday 19th April
Term starts Tuesday 20th April
INSET Friday 28th May
Half term week 31 May – 4 June
Term ends Friday 9th July

Plant and cake sale

Even the most disciplined of us could not resist the temptation on last Friday as the cakes on sale were simply delightful. Many could not decide between the scrumptious chocolate variety and the light lemon or banana sponge. Either way you would not have been disappointed.

The keen gardeners among us were spoilt too. Many varieties of tomatoes, strawberries, beans and others were perfect for the urban garden.

The plant and cake sale proved to be a great success raising £190 in just one hour. A big thank you to everyone who helped organise, donated plants and baked amazing cakes at such a short notice.



The fund raising group

Day of the Long Knives?

Every year at this time, some of the children go on camping trips - to the Olympics, to Plaw Hatch Farm, and often a one-night camp at the South London Scout Centre on the eve of the St John's festival. All three of these camps will be happening in the next few weeks.

As you know, if not from conversation with your class teachers and other parents, at least from our literature and consent forms, part of the strong ethos of the school is the belief that children should be allowed to use real tools and engage in activities that bring them into contact with the physical world in a way that is, sadly, prohibited now in most schools because of the strict 'Health and Safety' legislation imposed on them through pressure from insurance companies who fear litigation.

We believe that, by introducing them to the responsible and proper use of these things at what we feel is an appropriate age, far from putting the children at risk by allowing them to light fires, climb trees and use penknives on camping trips, we are giving them the skills to become independent, responsible and thereby, much safer than they would be if they came across them without any preparation.

Before the children are allowed to use penknives on camps, they are shown how to use them and then tested individually on use and safe handling. There is no pressure on parents to buy knives for their children if they don't want to and children who have not passed the test are not allowed to borrow knives from others. The rules surrounding their use are clear and strict and the children respect them. We have been following this procedure for more than five years now and it works very well. The children appreciate deeply the responsibility they are given and respond with maturity to being trusted. The tests take place at school, which is why you may have heard that some children have been bringing penknives to school. They have *not*, however, been allowed to play with them in the playground, as has been rumoured.

We hope that everyone in the school understands how important our position is on this issue and can support us. It is explained on the consent form you sign every year and we have always been open about it. We hope that, since you entrust your children to us every morning, you have confidence that we will make the right decisions for them while they are in our care. Sadly, not everyone is able to have that much trust, but we ask that, in future, you try to speak to one of us if you have a question about an issue like this, rather than going straight to the police, perhaps with misinformation, as happened recently.

The Officer who called informed us that it is perfectly legal for children to carry folding penknives with blades less than three inches long and to bring them to school for use under instruction from their teachers or to use them on camps. But of course we already knew that.

Amanda Bell

What's Happening in the classrooms?

Class 1 is currently working on a main lesson about Understanding the Environment through Nature Stories (weather, minerals, plants). We are working on the story of the Grain of Sand and its journey from the deepest part of the ocean and the interior of the earth towards the cave, rivers and back to the sea. Through retelling and improvisations based on the story, the children are learning listening and oral skills. They come up with sentences based on the story, and discover the individual words, sounds and blends. The children are also practising their writing and drawing skills through these nature stories.

This main lesson will serve as a preparation for Geography and Some Science Lessons in later classes. The story of the Grain of Sand is basically laying geological ideas like the rock cycle in a pictorial form.

In Form drawing, we are currently practising forms involving simple combinations of straight and curved lines and spirals. In the next five weeks, we will be working on forms inscribed in a circle.

Class one is also practising their skills with the four process through regular number work in the classroom.

Edwin Ladaga

Class 2&3: In the last block of the year, we are asking the questions 'where did that come from?' and more importantly 'who made that?' As we answer those questions, along comes the realisation that other people also have lives! To explore what someone else's life is like can be a welcome relief from being 'me' - an almost overwhelming experience for 9 and 10 year olds - and nurtures an interest in other people. Real interest always leads to compassion and understanding, which inevitably lead to love. Ultimately the most important thing we can teach children is to love other people. For me, this is the real purpose of education. A superficial study of farming that looks at milk production or crop rotation can never give them that. *This* is what makes Steiner education so different from other types of education. Even if you teach all the elements of the Steiner curriculum meticulously, unless they are taught with an understanding of the real aims - what we really need to give our children so that they can grow into whole, upright, useful human beings - we are giving them nothing but information which they could get for themselves. So our 'Farming' block in Class 2&3 is about building respect and gratitude for the people who produce our food for us (as well as for the animals that provide it) not by telling them 'you must have respect and gratitude!' but through developing an interest in and understanding of how they do it. We don't moralise about whether it's right to eat meat or get sentimental about the animals. The farmers at Plaw Hatch (where we will be going for a 4 day camping trip at the end of June) have a deep reverence for the animals and they keep them in the best possible conditions, but

there are some hard facts about meat and milk production which they don't avoid and now is the time for children (especially those who eat meat and cheese and milk) to hear them in a calm, compassionate way. Then, when they pick up a piece of cheese and they can picture the cows and the grass and the sunshine and the farmer who gets up at 5am and the cheese maker stirring the cream and wrapping the cheese in muslin and know that all of this lies behind it, I will feel that I have done my work well.

Amanda Bell

Class 4&5 have now entered the world of Ancient Greece. The myths from this culture are different from those of the previous ancient cultures we studied in that now the gods seem to almost descend to a human level. Olympus, the dwelling place of the gods, is upon the top of a mountain, not in a far away paradisiacal realm in the heavens. The gods become involved in human quarrels, take sides in battles, and even marry mortals, and human or half-human/half-gods become heroes. What can account for this change? It is a reflection of the change in consciousness humanity began to experience at this time in history. The thinking capacity of human beings begins to emerge and take hold of earthly life as seen through the development of philosophy, politics, and new ways of living together. Drama, which requires the ability to be more objective, to stand back and observe life, also develops at this time. Why are these myths right for the 10/11 year-old? It is because they, too, are beginning to experience a change in consciousness, an ability to be more objective, and to exercise their growing powers of thinking. Many children have already heard these Greek myths at an earlier age and then, perhaps, they were simply good stories without resonating as strongly and as meaningfully within. What does this mean for them when they hear these stories again? Sometimes as I start to tell one of the myths, a few children say, "Oh, I've heard this before." Then, they may only half-listen or say they already know what is going to happen and stop listening altogether which means they then have missed out on having the inner experiences which these powerful myths can awaken now at the age when the children are going through a similar change in consciousness that the Greeks were experiencing when these myths were a living picture of forces in the world.

There is great excitement in the class about the approaching trip to Michael Hall to take part in the annual Olympic event for children of this age in Steiner schools around the country. Approximately 400 children will participate, some coming from other countries to experience this event as it is not held in their own countries. The class have been training each week at King George's Park in the classic events of running, jumping, wrestling, throwing the discus, and the javelin.

Brian Jacques

Class 6&7 Is it possible to find any continuous pattern in the world around us? Why do we find some forms more beautiful than others? If there are patterns and sequences in numbers, is it possible that they also exist within us? What then, does this mean for us as individuals and as a group? These questions appear in our current main lesson, Man and The Geometry of Nature.

On our recent class outing to Kew Botanical Gardens we were able to discover that yes, indeed, patterns in nature exist and have been known about for many centuries. Thanks to mathematicians such as Fibonacci, we are able to rediscover the underlying principles behind some of nature's open secrets. To find pattern in a seemingly disorderly world can be helpful for us to know that it is possible to find stability within chaos. The societal structure of the honey-bee can be related to the order that lives in the world and within each of us, as potential. Nature is neither sentimentally nor emotionally volatile. The calm orderliness, given to minerals, plants and animals instinctually, can be consciously created within our own lives. Geometry and the coming main lesson, physiology, can help to bring greater understanding to the students of class 6&7 of their own stage of development by coming close to their own direct relationship to the world and to themselves.

We have begun to prepare for our coming class 7&8 trip fundraising by selling hot dogs to the students of other classes. We would like to thank everyone for their support.

Juanna Ladaga



School Support Teams Meeting

On 21st May the school management team and representatives from the school support teams met up to think about the future of our school. We are a flourishing school which is attracting more and more families, and our plan is now to move to somewhere bigger with room to house an upper school (a first in London), at least one more kindergarten and with extensive grounds so that we can really extend the range of activities available to our children.

We covered a lot of ground in the meeting, from the nuts and bolts of just how many square feet of space we need, to how to go about showing we are of benefit to the wider community (something we will need to demonstrate if we are applying for grants or loans from ethical lenders), to contemplating the first draft of the school's business plan. We need to find a suitable building to move to (important!) so if anyone sees a good building up for sale please contact the Premises team (Stephen Macbean 020 8874 5227). We also need to work on writing a full business plan, a major endeavour for which any offers of help would be gratefully received (see elsewhere in the newsletter).

The minutes of the meeting are available at reception for anyone who would like a blow-by-blow account (extremely gripping and highly recommended!). This is a very exciting and also very labour-intensive initiative for the school and the hope is that as many of us as possible will get involved in different ways at different times to make it happen.

Tara Osman

Skills Questionnaire

With this newsletter, you will have received a questionnaire about your skills. This is an initiative of the Management Team and its aim is to make a database of the information gathered which the School Support Teams can access when they need something done. If you feel able to contribute to this project, please fill in and return the questionnaire as soon as possible.

Amanda Bell
For the Management Team

Business Plan Meeting

Brian Jacques and Agnes (Leo's mum in Alejandra's Kindie) are currently working on a Business Plan for our school. We would like to invite those who wish to help to contribute to this project. This is a great opportunity to share your skills and ideas, so if you would like to do so, please come and join us. Our next meeting is on Monday, the 15th June at 3.15pm at the school.

Agnes Donazy

Personal Details

I am now updating the parents' contact list for September. If your address, phone number, mobile or email address has changed - or will change before September - please let me have the new information as soon as possible. Thank you

Graham

School CDs

The long awaited "Songs for Autumn & Winter" and new "Songs for Spring & Summer" CDs are now available from Graham at reception. These are collections of songs from the Kindergarten and Lower school, sung by the teachers and parents of the school. All proceeds to the school.
£8 each, £14 for 2,
£6 each for orders of 10 or more.

Sponsored Walk

5 July 2009
Richmond Park



It is now less than 4 weeks away from our sponsored walk. We hope all of you are now in receipt of the sponsorship form. It is our aim to make this event a real success and we really appreciate your ideas, inspiring stories and innovative thinking in helping us achieve this.

Just a little reminder, that we will only have 5 school days left after the walk to collect all the sponsorship money. Please make sure that you are able to hand the form and the collected money to your class rep by Wednesday 8th of July.

The fundraising group

Newsletter Contributions

The last newsletter of the academic year will be distributed on Friday 10th July. As this is also the last day of term, the absolute deadline for contributions is 6pm Wednesday 8th July. Email them please, to: amandabell@mac.com

An Introduction to Steiner Waldorf Education

4th July 2009

A day workshop with Josie Alwyn MA PGCE,
Upper School teacher at Michael Hall School
and

Richard House MA Ph.D,
Research Centre for Therapeutic Education,
Roehampton University.

For teachers, students and parents, offering a
flavour of the experience and underpinning
philosophy of this increasingly popular
educational approach, from Kindergarten to
University entrance. Cost: £80 for the day.

For more information and to book, visit
www.letsengage.co.uk or call 020 8392 3541

First Three Years Course

Supporting parents, Parent and Child Group leaders
and those who care for the very young child

At Rudolf Steiner House
Park Road
London NW1

Foodwise

with Wendy Cook

Author of *Foodwise* and *Biodynamic Food and
Cookbook*

Saturday June 13th 9.45am - 4.00pm

£45 / £35 concession

Contact 012277 33663

sam@greshoff.free-online.co.uk

Steiner School Wins Award

On Wednesday 3rd June 'The Good School's Guide' sent Michael Hall the 2009 A Level Award for Girls taking English Literature at an English Independent School. The awards are made on the basis of rigorous data collected over three years with the aim of highlighting excellent teaching in individual subjects. This is really an accolade for the Waldorf Educational method. Achieving the award is against all the odds: Waldorf schools are non-selective, non-streamed and often under-resourced in academic subjects, but they are here compared with English Independent schools, which are highly selective and where streaming for ability and ample resources are the norm. Even so, Waldorf students are hereby demonstrating that they can achieve better results at graduation than students in any other English Independent School.

English Literature A level examinations assess students' ability to interpret accurately; to think creatively and critically; and to communicate sound judgements in a clear expressive style of writing. Thus, the award seems to offer proof of the power of Waldorf education which aims, throughout all its years, at graduates who are not only practically and artistically skilled, but who are also independent and effective thinkers and writers at the highest level. The world needs them!

Dr Richard House

LOVELY RUDE HEALTH CEREALS FOR CHILDREN, PARENTS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY....

Camilla and Nick Barnard (parents of Emily and Max in kindergarten) have kindly offered to operate a scheme which will give everyone the opportunity to buy their delicious breakfast cereals at a 15% reduction on the listed prices on their Rude Health website. In addition, they will give 5% of the order value to the school. The offer is based on collecting the orders from their warehouse in Kimber Road - which is very close to school - next door to the East warehouse, then first in Granville Mews- Unit 1.

To take advantage of this offer, Nick is asking that you email him anytime on nick@rudehealth.com

To collect, the warehouse will be open for collections for one hour only from 8.30am to 9.30am on Fridays (except public holidays). Cash-only payments, please. As soon as he receives your email, he will confirm by return, the cost of your order.

On the point of quantities, please note that their puffs and flakes are in cases of EIGHT, and the porridge and mueslis in cases of FIVE. They welcome- but do not insist - on complete case orders, but that understandably. it will make the procedure easier for them if the outers all contain the same product.

They very much hope that you will take advantage of this kind offer, and have the opportunity of delicious, healthy breakfast cereals, which will also help the school!

Graham



Skills Questionnaire

Dear Parents & Friends,

The School is fortunate to have the help of many parents and friends throughout the year from organising the advent fair to maintaining the property. Whilst it helps the School it is also a good opportunity to meet other parents and school staff socially. If you are interested in becoming involved, however small, please fill in the form below so that we can identify your area of expertise and hand back to Graham in reception by Friday 26th June.

The School Management Team

Please use one form for each parent (if applicable)

Title:..... Full name:.....

Name(s) of child/children.....

Address:.....

Town:..... Postal Code:.....

Phone:..... Mobile:.....

Email:

Tick box 1 if this is best fits your main profession and box 2 if you have some experience in this sector. This may be through a previous job or hobby/past time. You may tick more than one box.

	1	2		1	2
Accountancy and business services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hospitality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertising, marketing and PR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human resources and recruitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Armed forces and emergency services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Information technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Banking, investment and insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charity and development work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Construction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creative arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Publishing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy and utilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environment and agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion and design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sport and leisure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fundraising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government and public administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transport and logistics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Others (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tick the box(es) below to indicate how you would like to support the School

- I would be interested in joining one of the support teams
- I would be interested in supporting a specific project (use space below)
- I would not mind being contacted by phone/email to give some advice in my relevant field
- I would not be interested

Other information *(Please write any other relevant information in this box)*