

The St Michael Steiner School

# Newsletter

*November 2020*



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In school this week...



Music in Class 4







Class 7 Eurythmy



Handwork in class 2/3







Tuesday Netball





# How Steiner kindergartens supported children and families in lockdown

*Silvia Lauzzana, parent, child leader and Kindergarten teacher, St Michael Steiner School  
Published in **Nursery World** Friday, October 2, 2020*

## Teacher Silvia Lauzzana on the innovative ideas Steiner kindergartens used to support children's learning without turning to technology



Parents know that their young children attending Steiner kindergartens thrive because of the many things they offer: a welcoming and nurturing social environment, where they can play, learn and discover with other children aged three to six, a natural outdoor environment that offers plenty of opportunities for exploration and physical development; the warmth and beauty of toys and equipment made from natural materials.

Parents also know their children thrive due to established trusting and warm relationships with the adults caring for them. The children benefit from the predictability of the routine, and parents know their child's well-being has been at the heart of the provision and planning.

In common with all schools and early childhood settings, work with children and families was interrupted as a result of the Coronavirus lockdown. Families became isolated, facing illness, bereavement or concerns about their future.

Amidst the uncertainty, stress and fear, Steiner Kindergarten teachers developed ways to support families, starting from a position of strong connection and an ethos of care that includes parents as well as children. Many kindergartens remained open for key worker and vulnerable children as well.

### SUPPORT FOR THE CHILDREN AND PARENTS IN THEIR HOME

For those families remaining at home, it was clear from the beginning that the use of technology (not encouraged for children in Steiner Early Years education) was not the appropriate way of communicating with the children.

Instead, the focus was on how to support the parents/carers in caring for their own children. The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF) organised a number of webinars for Steiner early years staff at the start and throughout lockdown to provide guidance and support.



They discussed how best they would do this with their families in their particular situations (city or countryside) as we realised the parents needed to be nurtured rather than bombarded with too much 'home work'. It also did not help that some kindergarten staff were furloughed. Yet, quickly, a number of different ways of support became evident.

Teachers maintained regular contact with families by email or phone calls. They provided parents with details of suitable activities, stories and songs for the whole family, creating beautiful newsletters full of ideas. They reassured parents again and again that they were providing what their children needed by maintaining a predictable routine that involved times of independent play, shared activity and time outside when possible – keeping it simple.

Many kindergartens prepared resources such as bags of craft materials and instructions that parents could pick up from kindergarten weekly, or that were delivered to the families' homes. Teachers organised parents evenings online to keep in touch and maintain the connection of the group.

Of particular concern was how best to support the learning of the older group of children, the six-year-olds, who are due to join Class 1 in a Steiner school (Year 2) in September.

These children are usually engaged in crafts and activities to develop their focus and attention as well as support their overall readiness for more formal education. Teachers provided materials and instructions along with online videos to enable parents to help children to complete their projects (making skipping ropes and hobby horses or sewing dolls, for example), and maintained regular contact with families to see how the projects were going. Special stories and games were also provided for these older children.

Using all of these means of keeping in touch, teachers kept alive one of the strengths of kindergarten life, and that is our sense of community: a community of parents, carers, children and the early years staff.

## REOPENING

When some year groups reopened in June, many children went back to kindergarten despite the continuous prevailing sense of uncertainty.

Kindergartens had to adjust to government guidelines and ensured that the children could



*Sewing kits were given to each child at May Tree Steiner Kindergarten, New School Canterbury*



*Cardiff Steiner kindergarten weekly project collection day*



come back in safely. Some had to change play space and even teacher in order to form the “bubbles”. Yet they quickly adjusted, and parents commented on how happy their children were to be back again. Teachers had been missing the children and the children missed the socialisation, beauty, fun, play and discovery that they can experience in their Steiner kindergarten.



Children playing outdoors, New School Canterbury

Despite government restrictions, the teachers were remarkably creative in preparing the safe, nurturing, playful, social and beautiful environment the children were used to before the lockdown.

Many of the soft toys and play equipment were removed, but new easily washable items were created and rotated to ensure health and hygiene measures were met. This included dolls, play cloths and home corner items. Most provision was managed outdoors, and creative and artistic activities continued, each child having their own bag of resources such as crayons and scissors for example.

Although the children are used to helping to cook a substantial snack each morning, they quickly became familiar with their packed lunches, and enjoyed having a picnic with their friends. Sandpits were shut, but mud kitchens were reinvigorated and proved invaluable.

Teachers have reported the children’s desire to play, to draw and work through some of the experiences of the past few months of course, but mainly to simply connect with each other, their joy and imagination undiminished by the fear and uncertainty that has been surrounding us all. Support for those remaining home continued. Many kindergartens also ran holiday clubs.

## PARENT AND CHILD AND BABY GROUPS

Many group leaders maintained contact with their families online, and as soon as possible, met for walks or picnics, or for small group sessions in the baby groups, where they could maintain social distancing outdoors.

The most important aspect of all this, is that connections with the families and Steiner community have been strengthened, and many parents have reported feeling nurtured, cared for and supported by their teachers and their community.

Photos: Amelia Gregory





### Visit to Grays Farm

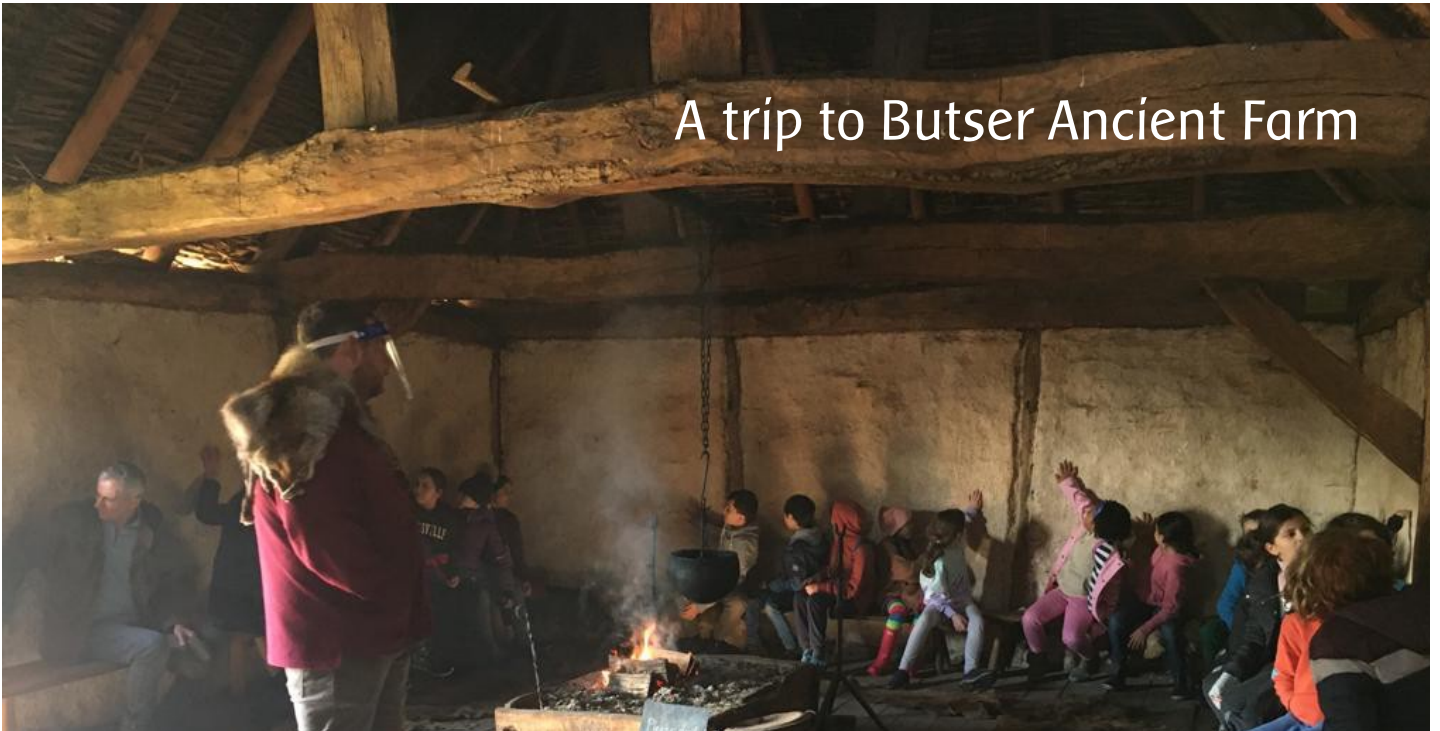
Last month, Classes 2, 3 and 4 had the pleasure of picking fruits and vegetables at Grays Farm in Berkshire. The weather was beautiful. The children picked raspberries, tomatoes and spinach, and dug up beetroot and carrots. Then they ran along the rows of beans and hid among the maize plants! Farmer Gray showed us his oscillating sprinkler, farm equipment, tractors, and even an ancient plough. We went home with bags full of produce and tummies full of raspberries!

Mrs. Ho





## A trip to Butser Ancient Farm



It was a lovely day for Classes 4 and 5 at Butser Ancient Farm. The friendly guide wore a fox pelt on his shoulders - that definitely got the children's attention! He led us into an old wattle and daub house, and we sat around the crackling fire. He asked us to touch the walls of the house, and then, to our dismay, informed us that we were touching poo! The walls were plastered with daub - a mixture of earth, straw, animal hair and cow dung. The children spent the rest of the day engaged in various crafts - spinning raw wool with drop spindles, making jewellery with a copper wires, twisting raffia into cords and making clay pots.

Mrs. Ho





# Community, notices and adverts

Dear School Families,

This is an invitation to you all to start knitting in support of our wonderful school and our community! In this time many obstacles are being put into our way from meeting as a community. That's why we propose to bring us all together in a creative project: knitted blankets to raise money for our school!

*so let's start knitting:*

*Please cut out a 15cmx15cm cardboard square to serve as a template and try to keep closely to this size.*

*Use any wool, colours and patterns to knit or crochet the squares.*

*If you don't have time to knit but you may have some unused wool at home that you are able to donate to this project that would be very welcome please contact me directly to arrange this.*

*I will ask if the class teachers or Grace could collect the finished squares for us to assemble the blankets.*

*Hoping for you to feel inspired!*

Best wishes,  
Lisa and the Knitters  
lisaclewing@gmail.com

## Therapeutic Eurythmy Sessions with Michèle (Zoom)

You are all warmly welcome to come along.  
Tuesdays 5 pm.

Let me know if you are interested in attending and I will send you the link on Mondays.  
All welcome.  
Students 16+

Email: [michelehunter@stmichaelsteiner.com](mailto:michelehunter@stmichaelsteiner.com)



### ADVENT STRINGS FOR SALE

A small gift to unwrap each day of Advent beginning on Sunday 29th November and ending on Christmas Eve. Many of the gifts are handmade and they reflect the treasures of the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms and culminate in the wonder of the Nativity.

If you would like to order a string at £25 each including postage please email [elizaconway\\_8@hotmail.com](mailto:elizaconway_8@hotmail.com)

Very best wishes  
Eliza Conway



## *Dear members of the community,*

We are Cecilia Eyssartier and Luis Monterubianesi, Waldorf educators, researchers and professors from Argentina. We have been living in Germany for one year and we are currently considering moving to England. The purpose of this letter is to introduce ourselves and offer our service to get actively involved in the community. We are interested in contacting a group of parents, schools, or any other educational institution who would be interested in our education programme for children integrating natural sciences, nutrition and arts (and also involving parents and teachers). We are concerned about children's nutrition and healthy development in this current world plenty of challenges, thus the aim of this programme is to improve children's connection with nature (and with their inner nature) by fostering environmental awareness and a sense of responsibility and sensitivity towards life processes; as well as children's adherence and engagement to salutary food and healthy habits.

In Argentina, we founded **Qumara Nutrition and Regeneration** in 2005 as a pedagogical centre with the aim of sharing knowledge and experiences about nutrition and health processes through a biological approach. We have developed courses for children, youth and adults, as well as trainings for teachers and health professionals emphasizing three main perspectives: human biology, vital and holistic nutrition, and detoxifying habits.

Since we arrived in Europe, we have been improving our education programme for children, titled "Nature-based and embodied education programme" (NEEP). We have been in contact with the community at the Peredur Centre for Arts where we have been performing some activities. It is opportune to mention that we have common purposes and it is our goal to continue working together.

The first step of this programme is the Pocket Garden through which children are invited to experience the seed's germination process through attentive observation, imagination and creativity, by exploring the living process of plant development in the shoes of a scientist, a chef and an artist. We consider that by understanding the importance of the biological processes in nature, such as seed germination which in turn substantially increases the nutritional value of food, children will develop a greater sense of awareness towards biological processes involved in human nutrition, thus promoting both mindfulness of caring for the environment and their own health.

On this basis, we have developed a book: "Germinating Life, cultivating a Pocket Garden" as a teaching-learning guide for children, teachers, parents and any other person who wants to get involved in this process of seed germination through this integrative perspective. In 2017 we firstly published the book in the Spanish version, and now we improved the English version thanks to the contributions of Peter Reichenbach from the Sevengardens global network (United Nations University). The Pocket Garden slowly intends to become a global network to connect children in different parts of the world with a common purpose. Through the Pocket Garden children can take action through meaningful activities that improve nutrition, autonomy, developing scientific, social and affective skills; and cultivating a heightened sense of awareness towards the natural world. It is also about supporting local organic markets and sustainable communities, carrying out significant projects within the school community.

We invite you to take a look at our website: [www.qumara.net](http://www.qumara.net), where you will find more details about ourselves, about the above mentioned information and more. It would be useful for us if those interested could contact us during this month of November. Please send your message to [ceciliaeyssartier@gmail.com](mailto:ceciliaeyssartier@gmail.com) or through our social media [qumaranet](#) in Instagram or Facebook.

We appreciate your interest and we hope to hear from you soon.

Warmly,

Prof. Dr. Cecilia Eyssartier and Prof. Luis Monterubianesi

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# GERMINATING LIFE

*Cultivating a pocket garden*

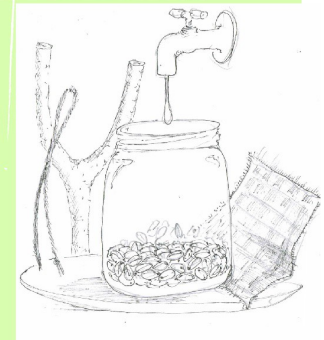
Prof. Dr. Cecilia Eyssartier & Prof. Luis Monterubianesi

The **Pocket Garden** is a little garden that grows inside a jar!

*This is such a tiny world that you can keep it in a pocket!*

Experimenting, drawing, painting, reading a story, singing, cooking and eating, and connecting the life in the seed to our vital daily nutrition in a meaningful and experiential way.

How about becoming pocket gardeners? By germinating life, we harvest health! Let's discover the mysteries of the seed's small universe by thinking, feeling and doing!



Develop a heightened sense of responsibility towards the natural world around us, based on children's own experience.



The **Pocket Garden** is part of the **Nature-based and Embodied Education Program (NEEP)**, which aims to integrate **Natural sciences, Nutrition** and **Arts**, promoting learning circumstances to encourage children's connectedness to nature, awareness and appreciation of salutary food and healthy habits through experiential learning.



sevenigardens



### *In the shoes of a scientist*

Attentive observation and experimentation, reflection and questioning through sensorial circumstances. Step by step to **develop an experimental design** (inquiry-based learning). Developing experiments and scientific skills.



### *In the shoes of an artist*

Storytelling, singing, drawing, painting ... Lively stories that enables children to get immersed in the life processes. Songs and poems promote motor and language skills through affective engagement with joy, imagination and inspiration.

**Sevengardens** enables to obtain natural colors from plants encouraging a meaningful connection with nature.

### *In the shoes of a chef*

Easy and delicious recipes to incorporate vegetables and fruits, seeds and sprouts daily lives promoting health and wellbeing.

Nourishing and tasty food in a creative, conscious and enjoyable way.

Mindful eating. **Our health and our Planet's Health as One Health**



## *Aims*

- Favor experiential connectedness to nature and engagement with plants in formal and informal educational contexts.
- Promote the incorporation of nourishing plants as salutary daily food (seeds, fruits and vegetables), thus contributing to increase the nutritional value.
- Contribute to the consolidation of healthy habits from an early age favoring accurate eating habits in adulthood.
- Promote cognitive abilities, resilience and wellbeing during childhood.
- Improve teaching strategies and embodied learning processes, considering the intellectual and affective domains.
- Favor sustainable and healthy communities by considering high nutritional quality food and local food production.
- Small-step measures for climate protection by favoring pro-environmental children's behavior and their sense of responsibility towards living processes, given the current worldwide ecological crisis.



**Prof. Dr. Cecilia Eyssartier** is a scientific researcher and school teacher from Argentina with a PhD in Biological Sciences, specialized in ethnobotany and medicinal plants cultivated and gathered by south american native communities. RCE Ruhr partner and Sevengardens dialoguer.

**Prof. Luis Daniel Monterubianesi** is a researcher and High School teacher from Argentina specialized in Nutrition and Holistic Health. RCE Ruhr partner and Sevengardens dialoguer.

In 2005 Cecilia Eyssartier and Luis Monterubianesi founded **QUMARA Nutrition and Regeneration**. They have developed a Biological Nutrition Program integrating the three essential aspects of human biology, food vitality and body cleansing habits.



[www.qumara.net](http://www.qumara.net)

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