

The St Michael Steiner School Newsletter



October 2022

Dates for your diary

OCTOBER 2022

Thursday 20th

3pm/4pm – End of half term

Friday 21st

all day – INSET DAY (no school)

Monday 24th - Friday 28th

Half Term (no school)

Monday 31st

8.25am – Back to school

NOVEMBER 2022

Saturday 26th

11am-4pm – Advent Fair

Monday 28th

all day – Long weekend (no school)

DECEMBER 2022

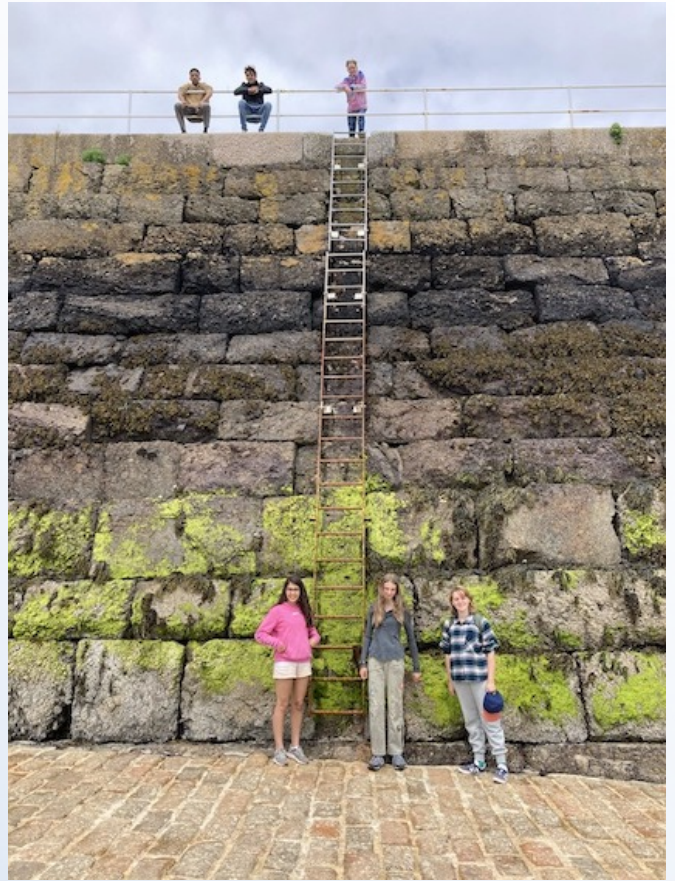
Friday 16th

End of term (times and festivals to be announced)

With Summer now past, we take a final look back to last term, to Class 8's trip to Jersey.







What is Michaelmas and why do we celebrate it?

After long sunny days and a very hot summer, autumn has arrived and everything is slowly turning inwards both in Nature and within us. It is the time of harvest, a time to reap what we have sown and prepare for the winter months ahead. Every year before school starts, as we are getting ready to receive the children into the classrooms again, we rekindle our creativity and enthusiasm in order to stand in front of our pupils strongly and truthfully. It is almost as if the sunlight we soaked during the summer has transformed within us, in the way we gather our forces for the new academic year. Perhaps during the summer holidays we ate a little too much ice cream or gave in to the power of Netflix for too long. Maybe we slept late every night and had far too many lazy days doing nothing. But autumn comes as a reminder of what we value as important and shakes us off our summer dream. There is work to be done, students to be met.

Outside we are witnessing nature falling asleep, the air turning cooler and the days shortening but inwardly we engage the fire of our will to meet our tasks.

Even though school starts at the beginning of September, it is on the 29th that we feel we have properly begun. September 29th is Michaelmas day, the day of the Archangel Michael — after whom our school is named — who according to the legend conquered with his sword of iron, the dragon that was threatening heaven. He simply appeared and through his presence the dragon was tamed.

Contemplating this image of Michael and the dragon, we can think about our own personal 'dragons', how they keep us from understanding who we really are in essence and the courage it takes to face them. Perhaps making them disappear completely is an impossible task but we have the power to tame them, with our own iron sword, our will. In this way, Michaelmas becomes the festival of iron will.

As human beings we have the freedom to face the dragon or hide and pretend it does not exist. It is in our hands whether we will conquer it or not. In Rudolf Steiner's words: *Michael merely shows his road, so that Mankind may walk on it in Freedom.*

In our school, we celebrate Michaelmas by working in the school grounds, sharing soup and bread prepared by the students and ending the day with the famous dragon game, an absolute favourite by all students.

Every year, at the end of Michaelmas we leave the school physically tired but deeply grateful and nurtured. Every year we tell each other that Michaelmas should not be just one day but a whole week or perhaps a whole term! It is not only because of the joy of a day working together but because we are reminded of the importance of manual work as a will exercise and how in serving the community we come closer to ourselves. We don't expect young children to be conscious of that of course but most of what we do as teachers is planting seeds for the future. We hope that in the future our children will become adults who can stand in the world upright and face their own dragons with courage and determination.

Rudolf Steiner wrote a verse for every week of the year in his 'Calendar of the Soul'. This is the one for Michaelmas:

Nature! Your maternal being
I carry in my deepest will;
The fire of my will makes strong
The mettle of my spirit
And thus is born that sense of self
That steels myself to carry me.

— Eleni Karakonstanti





Maths in kindergarten

During my latest PGCE study session on Maths, we were told that “Maths is everywhere”. Maths is meant here in its broadest sense, as including numbers, shapes, sizes, patterns and measures. Our kindergartens are not exempt from delivering a maths curriculum, and a lot of maths is going on during the day when the children are in our care. When we look at the activities we do, the toys and equipment, and the natural environment maths is indeed everywhere. The children explore patterns when they paint, draw, make strings of conkers and rosehips, look at the veins of leaves in autumn or ice in winter, make mandalas with nature’s treasures and build cars and houses with large wooden blocks. They explore measures, shapes and sizes when they chop vegetables for soup, make bread dough by mixing cups of flour, water in a jug and teaspoons of yeast and salt, when they use bowls, cups and spoons to make their mud soups and various potions. They learn about numbers in practical and tangible ways when counting how many children there are and how many chairs and cups and bowls we need for snack time. The teachers sing songs and rhymes, using gestures, that include numbers. The children play “shops” or “shows” and they need “money” to buy and sell objects and tickets. Crucial for maths learning is the role of the adult, as a model, or scaffolding, to support children’s learning, developing their mathematical skills. The way we do this in kindergarten is by using *maths talk* in our everyday language. For example: “Can you please pass me those *two* buckets?” or “My breadstick is *long* and *thin*” or “You may use this *round* sieve”. As well as maths talk, we use *positional language* to support the development of children’s spatial awareness. When a child climbs up a tree or the climbing frame, we may ask: “What can you see from *up there*”? They stretch their necks and engage their visual sense,



looking to the distance and saying what they see. Spatial awareness develops when the three senses of balance, proprioception and sight are integrated. Hence, the children’s daily outdoor practice helps them gain spatial awareness, which is important for everyday tasks like orienting oneself in space, doing sports, cooking, driving and following directions. From a very young age, some say even from birth, children are hard-wired to learn maths. We support this without making gender or age differences, without formal instructions or abstract teaching, yet using daily, practical and meaningful opportunities to practise maths.

— Silvia Lauzzana



Class 2 have been taking weekly walks to Bushy Park, and exploring all the colours in their painting lessons.





Class 6 spent the week blacksmithing!



EURYTHMY COSTUME DEPARTMENT

Ever since I started teaching at the school, guiding the pupils towards their eurythmy performances on stage, we have gathered costumes: silk dresses, tunics and veils of varied sizes and colours. These costumes allow the pupils to move differently, using their veils to sculpt air into expression, and feel a certain freedom around as they flow through space.

The costumes have been produced by various class parents who have carried the financial load of buying the material and making them. For this we are truly grateful.

We have now reached a point where most costumes are re-used and passed down from class to class. These need to be cared for, which is no mean feat in the activity of performance preparations.

To help us continue to care for all the costumes, **I am looking for a small group of parents to meet for coffee mornings/tea afternoons, to chat, sew poppers, and mend anything that requires attention.** I am happy to find a way to start you off and show you the ropes if needed.

If anyone feels called to host a group of parents willing do this, a costume department may begin to take shape and growing care may become part of the experience. I would be over the moon to know that our beautiful silk costumes are in such good care.

Can you offer your time and skills to help out? Thank you for getting in touch.

michelehunter@stmichaelsteiner.com



STUDENT COUNCIL

We are pleased to announce our newly formed Student Council, made up of 10 representatives from the four High School classes. We are currently developing fundraising ideas, charitable connections, and new student initiatives. Look out for updates!

WHERE'S WALTER?

Class 10 student
Walter Kelly is hiding
in one of the photos
in this newsletter. Can
you find him?



COMMUNITY PAGES



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.

PEDAGOGICAL EURYTHMY WORKSHOP

On the 27 and 28th January 2023, we will be hosting a group of eurythmy teachers for a weekend of pedagogical workshops which will take place at the church hall where I teach.

We will have one workshop on the Friday evening and all day Saturday.

These eurythmy teachers come from Waldorf schools all over the country to attend.

It is usually a small-ish group. I will be holding this event, and I am looking for support in two ways:

1) Spare room, somewhere to sleep, an affordable place to rest:

My colleagues will be most grateful for a place to lay their heads for the night. They are usually considerate and discreet. They will need somewhere for 2 nights (Friday and Saturday), and some may only stay the Friday night 27th.

2) Catering:

One or two people who would be happy to cook for us; making vegetarian food for a group of approx 10/12 people for lunch on Saturday. There is an oven at the hall, crockery and cutlery. All that is required is the food and cooking.

Thank you for getting in touch.

michelehunter@stmichaelsteiner.com

Do you have something you would like included in the Community Pages of the newsletter?

Send it to Stella (stellaottewill@stmichaelsteiner.com).