

The St Michael Steiner School

Pupil Assessment Policy

Introduction

The basis of the school's pupil assessment policy is progress and development, rather than perceived norms and benchmarks. It is understood that a child's development does not follow a smooth upward path; that there are pauses and spurts along the way, and each child will have a different journey. It is this individual journey that is assessed, to ensure that each child is developing appropriate faculties and skills and is achieving what is possible for them. Children are not measured against each other, and, from interviews and from the questionnaire we include in the application form, it is clear that very often this is one of the main reasons that parents choose to come to the school.

There is no formal testing in the Kindergarten, Lower or Middle School, or in the High School below Class 10. In Classes 10, 11 and 12, we offer formal assessment through the Certificate of Steiner Education (CSE) (See 'Assessment in the High School').

The Early Years department has its own assessment policy. (See document 'EY Assessment Policy and Procedure')

There is continuous, informal assessment and monitoring of children's progress and needs throughout the school. This is supported through several aspects of Waldorf education:

Child Study

Observation or study of children is a central tenet of Waldorf education; our curriculum and practice develop out of an understanding of child development and observation of individual children. (see documents 'Child Study Facilitation' and 'Child Study article 2015')

In the pedagogical meetings, which take place in different departments (Kindergarten, Lower and Middle School, High School), weekly studies of individual pupils are carried out. The Class Teacher or Main Lesson Teacher prepares a detailed description of the chosen child or student and s/he is discussed for about an hour.

Sometimes all the faculties come together for a Child Study so that staff working in different areas get to know all of the pupils in the school. In the Summer term the rising Class 1 children are the subjects of these studies and are brought in small groups.

Subjects for these studies are chosen by the faculty, but usually a Class Teacher or Tutor will ask to bring someone. Often, but not always, the chosen subject will be someone who is experiencing difficulties, or someone with whom teachers are struggling. When new children join the school, they are usually studied within their first year.

The aim is to try to understand the child and find what help is needed. Studies are reviewed after a few weeks to see if there has been any improvement or if something else needs to be done.

The Class Teacher relationship

Between the ages of 7 and 14, the children have the same Class Teacher. This allows a strong relationship of mutual trust and interest to develop, so that the teachers get to know the children very well and can closely monitor their progress; Class Teachers know each of their children's strengths and weaknesses and notice very quickly if someone is struggling or needs a challenge.

Teachers who have concerns about a particular child will consult colleagues who teach the class and often also ask a colleague who does not teach the class to observe him/her.

Observation in classes

Teachers observe in other people's classes on request, whenever they have the time, and with the agreement of the teacher concerned. This is especially helpful for part-time, subject teachers or new teachers, who may not know the children so well. Watching children being taught by someone else allows us to observe individual children in a way that is not possible when teaching, and to see how they behave and work with other people, which can inform our practice.

It is expected that all staff will welcome colleagues to observe their lessons, although it may not always be possible because of special activities going on in the class. It is usually helpful to give some notice if possible.

All staff have guidelines for what to look for when observing in lessons. (See document 'Guidelines for Observation')

A central log is kept and circulated to College members termly so that the College is aware if anyone has not been observed recently.

Staff share their observations with the colleague who has been observed and keep their own notes. Any concerns are discussed with a/another College member.¹ Anything that then needs to be reported is brought to the College.

Marking and Feedback

In the Lower and Middle School, Main Lesson work is checked daily and books are checked weekly as a minimum. In younger classes, marks are not usually made in the books, but the books are checked to make sure work is finished and to point out corrections that need to be made. Verbal feedback and advice is given on each piece of work on a daily basis.

In Classes 1 - 3, where written feedback to children is not given, teachers keep notes about their progress and their work. These notes inform planning.

From Class 4, marking in the children's books is usual and they are expected to correct most of their mistakes themselves (i.e. the marking simply draws attention to the mistake).

In language lessons, books are collected and marked after each block (blocks are between 3 and 6 weeks long). Vocabulary and verb tests are given and checked in the lessons. From Class 5 onwards, homework and bookwork is collected and marked every week. Any issues are raised with the Class Teacher.

In all classes, maths work is marked during the lessons by the teacher and/or by the children/students themselves, who sometimes mark their own work and sometimes each other's. Where children have marked their own work, the marking is checked daily by the teacher.

¹ Unless there is a potential safeguarding issue, in which case a Designated Safeguarding Lead should be consulted immediately and his/her advice followed.

In Art, Handwork and craft lessons, work is monitored and discussed with students in every lesson. If younger children are working very slowly they are given easily achievable tasks requiring a little more work (quantity) as a challenge. The work itself is a good indicator of effort and skill.

In the High School, all drafts of written work are marked and feedback is given to improve final copies. High School students submit their Main Lesson books (if required) at the end of each block. These are marked and written feedback is given to the student and to his/her tutor on the bookwork and on the overall participation in the Main Lesson block.

Main Lesson work is not graded in any part of the school. A progress monitoring table template is available. High School teachers have agreed to use this; Some written record of children's progress must be kept in all areas of the school, but Lower and Middle School teachers may have other ways of monitoring this.

Formal Assessment in Classes 10, 11 and 12

We offer formal assessment and certification through the Steiner School Certificate (SSC) in Classes 10, 11 and 12. (See High School Student Assessment Policy)

Feedback to parents

Parents receive a comprehensive end-of-year report in July. (See document 'Report Guidelines') Younger children who are collected from school by their parents are in daily contact with the Class Teacher. If there are any concerns, parents are consulted and advised. Every class holds a parents' evening once a term; these are not for individual feedback but they are an opportunity for teachers to inform parents about what their children are learning, and for parents to ask any general questions. All parents may request one-to-one meetings with any of the teachers if they want to know how their children are doing. (See Parents' Handbook)

Specialists and Therapists

Our work in assessing and monitoring the children is supported by specialist professionals as and when needed:

Dr Jenny Josephson normally visits the school every term and sees between 5 and 9 children, chosen by the teaching faculty, on each visit.

Dr Francisco Barcello normally comes once or twice a year and sees 9 children each time. He works with and advises staff about children with learning difficulties and special needs.

Notes are kept centrally and are available to all teachers for reference.

Ann Swain, a specialist in learning support, visits the school to assess children as needed.

In most cases, support can be provided by the teachers, based on the outcome of steps outlined above.

Sometimes the school doctor will prescribe a specific therapy, in which case the school will either provide it, if possible, or recommend a practitioner to the parents.

When special educational or behavioural needs are identified or suspected, an assessment by someone from the Steiner Waldorf Association for Special Education Needs and Disability (SWASEND), an educational psychologist or other professional may be initiated.

(See document 'SEND policy' for details about how we work with children with special needs)

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