

The St Michael Steiner School Early Years Assessment in the Early Years Policy

Assessment is an important part of good educational practice and related to long, medium and short-term planning. The assessment methods and criteria should reflect the philosophy and educational approach of Steiner Waldorf education. Good teaching practice occurs when the self-reflective teacher also regularly appraises and assesses their teaching as well as the progress of each individual child, supported and affirmed by a strong collegial circle which is committed to high quality education. Assessment highlights clarity or its lack in every aspect of teaching practice.

At our kindergarten, regular assessment of each child's healthy and age-appropriate development rests upon the following procedures.

Application Form

As part of the application process, an initial meeting is arranged between the kindergarten teachers, the parents and their child(ren). At the meeting, the parents are also invited to look around the kindergartens. Any concerns are discussed, and questions answered. The information gathered at this meeting will form the basis for the starting points assessment. If the child has been at a previous nursery or school, we will ask to contact that setting for a brief report. Any additional notes are written and form the basis of the child's records throughout their time in kindergarten. After the settling in period (approximately 6 weeks), the starting points assessment form is updated and shared with parents, who are asked to write some feedback.

Shared Observation

The teachers and other staff will do this daily or weekly as required. A folder is kept for each child with ongoing observations, some photos and drawings, notes from adult-led activities and parental contributions.

On-going dialogue with Parents

We aim to develop a warm yet professional relationship with the parents of the children in our care. Our Early Years Parents' Handbook, available on the school website and a printed copy can be found in kindergarten, is updated each year to provide parents with information about the school. Information about our ethos and philosophy is given through regular meetings with the parents of each child, termly Parents' Evenings, and other workshops for parents. We also provide talks on subjects to do with our educational principles, invite outside speakers and offer workshops when possible. We welcome families to participate in our festivals, and class representatives are appointed each year to help coordinate parental activities.

Communication with parents will then continue:

- a) Informally at the end of each kindergarten session when necessary.
- b) By email or by phone, when necessary.
- c) In a more structured setting at the termly parent evenings where general child development will be shared.
- d) A minimum of two meetings with individual parents by arrangement in a year.
- e) Home visits at the invitation of parents.

We welcome the partnership created between parents and the early years staff and consider it essential. The contribution of parents regarding their child's development with examples often taken from home life gives us all a rounded ongoing understanding for each child.

Child Study

The child study is acknowledged to be the core of child-assessment in a Waldorf Steiner Kindergarten. Child studies are carried out by teachers and shared in pedagogical meetings on a weekly basis. When the teachers feel a child needs extra support and understanding, a more detailed study is undertaken of individual children. In the spring and summer terms, early years staff attend whole school faculty meetings where child studies of the rising Class 1 children are presented by the kindergarten teachers.

Special Educational Needs

Our Special Educational Needs Policy acknowledges the need for extra specialised assessment and SEN support for the children who need it. We are also able to draw on the support of the Hounslow Early Years team. Please refer to the Early Years Special Educational Needs policy and procedures for further information on assessment for SEN.

Assessments

The starting points report is shared with the parents after the settling in period has ended. Twice a year we complete a summative assessment form in line with the EYFS and the Steiner Waldorf early childhood curriculum for every child. This is available for discussion with parents at individual meetings and at the end of the school year. End-of-year reports for each child are provided to parents at the end of the first year of kindergarten, in the final term of the EYFS (the summer term during the year the child turns five) and the following year when children leave kindergarten.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

The St Michael Steiner School has exemptions from undertaking this profile assessment.

Entering the Lower School

The transition to class 1 is automatic and all children are accepted to join our Lower school in Class 1, in the year following their sixth birthday. We do not have a cut-off date, and all children who turn six years old before 31st August are considered, although children who are born in July and August may benefit from remaining in kindergarten a further year. A team including the class teacher, eurythmist, kindergarten teachers and the school's anthroposophical medical advisor will inform our decision-making, in conjunction with discussions with parents.