

The St Michael Steiner School

**Early Years
Parents'
Handbook**

September 2023 to July 2024

*This handbook, updated annually, provides information specifically about the Early Years.
It should be read in conjunction with the main school Parents' Handbook, also updated annually.*

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Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf Education

In the chaos of Europe after the First World War, many people hoped for and believed in a better future, based on new social forms. One of these was the industrialist, Emil Molt, owner of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart. Molt was a friend of the philosopher and scientist, Rudolf Steiner. Steiner had written books and given lectures on education and now Molt asked him to found a school for the children of the workers in his factory. Rudolf Steiner accepted his proposal on two conditions: that he would be free from every political, economic or religious control in following his educational principles, and that children of every social and economic class would be admitted. The school was to be 'free', he said, as an artist is free to create out of the necessities of his material. Steiner trained twelve teachers based on a study of child development, and 'The Waldorf School' opened in September 1919.

The first Waldorf - or Steiner - school in the English-speaking world opened in south London in 1925. Since then, this innovative form of education has continued to be popular and relevant and there are now around 1,090 schools worldwide and 1,857 kindergartens.

Each of these schools, whilst being independent and part of its local community, shares an educational approach behind which stands a deep understanding of the human being in body, soul and spirit, which Rudolf Steiner wrote and spoke about in several hundred books and lectures during his life. He called this knowledge 'Anthroposophy' - literally 'wisdom of the human being' - and in it he described and characterized the different stages of development that can be observed in the journey through childhood (and also through adulthood).

In his lectures on education, he gave many indications for suitable subject matter and approaches to teaching for different ages but always stressed that teachers must be free to interpret these indications in their own way. Indeed, he said, if they did not do so, Steiner Waldorf education would become a method as good as, but no better than, many other methods.

"From Play, through Beauty to Work. This is a golden path for education. In later life the most abstract tasks, the most difficult techniques, do not arouse antipathy if this path has been followed during childhood." Rudolf Steiner

In Steiner Waldorf schools, like some other educational philosophies, formal learning does not begin until the children are in their seventh year. Rudolf Steiner asked Elizabeth Grunelius, a Froebel trained teacher, to set up the first kindergarten. He asked Elizabeth to write a report on how we can bring life and domestic activity into the kindergarten in such a way that the intensity and love of action which is expressed in the child's play can re-emerge later in the work and social life of the adult. Elizabeth wrote down her definition of a Waldorf Kindergarten:

- A Waldorf Kindergarten should protect children from too early intellectuality.
- A Waldorf Kindergarten can be anywhere in the world, in its every essence it addresses fundamental humanness.
- A Waldorf Kindergarten rests only on this principle. Everything else is open to the fresh initiative of the teacher.

History of The St Michael Steiner School

Founded in 2001 by a group of teachers in Wandsworth, the school moved in 2012 to its current location, a Grade II Listed Georgian country house set within approximately 3 1/2 acres (1.2 hectares) of private grounds in the Hanworth Park Conservation Area. The property was originally built in 1812 as a Rectory and has since been adapted and extended over the years. Both the house and grounds retain great charm. The school caters for children from birth to eighteen years of age.

The Early Years Provision

Early childhood groups are provided as follows:

Two Kindergartens, age 3 to 6 years: Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 12.30 pm

Lunch Session: Monday to Thursday, 12.30 pm to 1.30 pm

Afternoon Session: Monday to Thursday, 12.30 pm to 3.00 pm

Parent and Child groups:

Currently: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Fridays - 10.00 am to 12.00 noon
(children from birth to 3½-4 years of age and their parents/carers)

Saturday Sessions am: (birth to 6 years) as advertised.

Please book your sessions in advance on a half-termly basis by calling the school's reception or via email to Velika, Parent and Child group leader, at velikadimova@stmichaelsteiner.com

The Kindergarten, children age between three to six years

The real work of young children is creative free play, through which their will forces are strengthened while, at the same time, they learn to become social beings and integrate into a group. Plenty of time is provided for unstructured, child-initiated free play, both indoors and outside in the garden. This time is held within the clear daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms, giving the young child a sense of belonging and security and allowing each child to develop at his or her own pace. Alongside the play, healthy snacks are prepared and eaten with the children, and daily seasonal songs and stories give the children experience and enjoyment of language, as well as the opportunity to develop social awareness. Repetition and routines are used as a foundation for healthy imitation, the child's natural impulse for learning. Toys are of natural materials and are as unfinished as possible - simple dolls, plain wooden trucks, stones and sticks for building, as well as planks, tables, chairs and play stands for larger structures, pieces of cloth in beautiful colours for dressing up, wrapping dolls and making walls - so that the child can 'finish' them with their own imagination. These activities are also the foundation of practical, experimental maths and science, language acquisition and all areas of learning.

Adult-initiated activities including handwork, sewing, simple woodwork and beeswax modelling are available to enable the children to experiment with and express their own creativity. Care is taken of both the indoor and outdoor physical environment with activities such as mending, cleaning and gardening. Many activities are taken outdoors to do or complete, creating a bridge between the two environments.

Indoors and outdoors: free-flow play

Children from both kindergartens play together outside every day whatever the weather and often enjoy ring-times and picnics outdoors too. The garden has apple trees, wide

grassy spaces, a mud kitchen, a sandpit, climbing structures, monkey bars, swings, logs and planks for den-making, beds for growing vegetables and flowers, a fire-pit log circle, plus a gazebo for story-telling and sheltered play. Rainwater is harvested from the Cottage roof in one big barrel, enabling children to water the growing garden and make mud pies. The weekly soup is cooked over an open fire whilst children sit on logs or help gather firewood. The school benefits from direct access to the wide open spaces of Hanworth Park and playground areas. Once children are settled after the beginning of term, we take regular hikes around the park, visiting the River Longford and observing the landscape changing through the seasons.

Daily and Weekly activities

Children are free to participate in both domestic and artistic activities every day, often assisting adults in their work. Domestic activities include snack preparation, washing up, gardening, cleaning, mending, ironing and caring for our kindergarten environment. Artistic activities include painting, crafts, drawing and modelling (with beeswax or dough).

Paintings may be for a forthcoming festival, and baking is varied: bread, chapattis, pizza, biscuits, etc. Most crafts are seasonal and often enhance festival celebrations. Whilst specific items are made, children are also free to use materials in their own creative way and a craft area is always accessible in the kindergarten with paper, scissors, glue, and other artistic materials. Through imitation of the adult ‘crafters’, children have the opportunity to acquire new skills including finger knitting, sewing, woodwork, modelling, and can independently make or help to make special objects for festivals, for example lanterns for the Autumn Martinmas walk.

The usual daily rhythm:

- 8.25/8.30 am: arrival
- Outdoors and/or indoor creative free play, including snack preparation and artistic activities
- Tidy up
- Ring time
- Snack time
- Outdoor creative free play, washing and drying up
- Story time / puppet show
- 12.30 pm: home time

This routine provides longer ‘breathing-out’ times of free play, and a shorter ‘breathing-in’ of adult-led times of songs, story and snack time. This is a healthy rhythm for the growing child and helps the child become more confident within the familiarity of the daily routine. This is also the basis of creative discipline.

Afternoon Session and Lunch club (Monday to Thursday)

This is available for children who are settled and able to manage a full day, or those whose parents are working and unable to collect their children by 12.30 pm. There are two options:

- ✧ Lunch Club: 12.30-1.30 pm: a freshly cooked vegetarian lunch is provided. Children may be picked up by 1.30 pm.

- ✧ **Afternoon Session: 12.30-3.00 pm.** After lunch children are encouraged to have a quiet time, maybe a rest or 'sleep', they listen to the lyre/glockenspiel being played or enjoy stories together. After the rest time our children have access to indoor and outdoor free creative play. All children must be collected by 3 pm.

Sessions must be booked per term and will be invoiced termly. Daily fees are £10.00 for Lunch Club and £20.00 for Afternoon session (including lunch).

Healthy Eating

Children are offered a healthy, organic (wherever possible) mid-morning snack, with the focus on a different grain for each weekday. The weekly vegetarian menu is inspired by the principles of biodynamic farming. This is not spoken to the children, but supports a cosmic rhythm to the week (see book list for more information). The seasonal menus are posted on the kindergartens' notice-boards.

Meals are an important part of the morning's activity, and children are involved on a daily basis in the preparation, cooking and serving of food. For many children, the days of the week are recognised by the food of that day: "*Today is rice day*", or "*It's millet day today!*". Children with allergies are catered for and efforts are made to ensure all children are able to eat the foods prepared together. If your child has food allergies it is important to update your child's teacher regularly. As the physical body develops, children sometimes grow out of allergies during the time they are in kindergarten.

Festivals always include a feast of relevant delicacies, often brought from home, or prepared in the kindergarten.

The following is a selection of morning snacks regularly prepared and eaten with the children:

Monday: **Rice** Warm brown rice served with plain yoghurt and honey
Rice cakes and spreads

Tuesday: **Oats** Porridge with apple sauce and seeds
Apple muesli with fruit juice or rice milk
Oatcakes and spreads
Oaty apple crumble

Wednesday: **Millet** Warm millet with carrot/cucumber sticks and tamari sauce

Thursday: **(Rye)** Vegetable Soup served with kindergarten home-made spelt bread

Friday: **(Barley)** Home-brought picnic snack - each child brings their own healthy snack which we may eat whilst on a walk or enjoy as an 'indoor picnic' in cold weather.

Menus are posted/updated regularly on the kindergartens' notice-boards.

Fresh water is always available and accessible for children to help themselves throughout the day. Warm flower, fruit or herb teas are provided at mid-morning snack. Home-grown mint is used in teas and elderflowers are made into cordial in the summer for special occasions.

*“Blessings on the blossom,
Blessings on the fruit,
Blessings on the leaves and stems,
Blessings on the roots.
And blessings on our meal.”*

Grains for the weekend are: corn/maize for Saturday and wheat on Sunday.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

Along with all early years settings in England, the kindergarten works within the statutory framework of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that is founded on four overarching principles:

- every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
- children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates.

The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The current Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework was revised in September 2023. It has three sections:

1. Learning and Development

For younger children, the emphasis for learning and development is founded on the three prime areas of communication and language, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development. As children develop, focus is placed more on the four specific areas of literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design.

Children come to kindergarten with a variety of home languages and learn to pick up English quickly in the rich oral environment of the kindergarten. English language acquisition is supported through repetition of stories and songs, copies of stories can be given to parents to read at home, puppets are used to embellish storytelling, and parents are invited to help translate specific key words. Staff speak a number of languages including Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Bulgarian, alongside English.

The Steiner kindergarten environment and staff team provide children with exceptional opportunities to develop in all these prime and specific areas, with some exceptions in the areas of reading, writing and use of computers, where, along with all registered Steiner Schools in England, the kindergarten benefits from exemptions.

THE STATUTORY EYFS AND EXEMPTIONS

The Statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), birth to 5 years, applies to all settings including ours. It sets standards for the learning, development and care of

children from birth to 5 years old. You can find a *parent's guide to the EYFS* on the government website: <https://foundationyears.org.uk/2019/08/eyfspractice/> You can also find out more about *Steiner Education* at <http://www.steinerwaldorf.org> . As there are some areas which are not part of the Steiner Waldorf early childhood principles and practice, early years Steiner settings have 'Exemptions and Modifications' to the EYFS Learning and Development requirements and Assessment regulations under the 'Established Principles' route. These are mostly to do with the introduction and in some cases formal teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and the use of IT/media and electronic gadgetry. There is no exemption from statutory requirements such as safeguarding and welfare requirements.

The Key Person

The overall Key Person (See EYFS) in each kindergarten group is the kindergarten teacher who has the overview of all the children in their group. The teacher will write up assessments, reports and feedback to parents. However, all staff may communicate with parents on a day-to-day basis at drop-off and pick up times. In order to properly meet the individual needs of each child, and to properly observe and assess their learning and development, each key person should be attentive to around 8-10 children in the group. Therefore, kindergarten assistants may at times be given a key person role in respect of certain children in the group, and they will share information with the kindergarten teacher on a regular basis. Parents will usually be informed should a specific person other than the kindergarten teacher take on that role.

Sharing learning at home

Parents can support their child's kindergarten experiences by providing healthy rhythms and routines in the home environment, and nourishing food to eat. Extra activities outside school hours may overwhelm and exhaust the child. These are often 'taught' or coached in a way that does not meet the developmental phase of a young kindergarten child, and can deplete their energy. Most children enjoy looking at books, and listening to stories, especially about their parents' own life. Children may tell parents about their kindergarten experiences several days after events have happened, as their relationship to time is still developing.

2. Assessment

Continuous observation of the children is undertaken throughout the kindergarten years. Each child has a folder in which observations and examples of drawings and crafts are kept. Photographs may be used to support observations. Current emphasis has moved from focusing specifically on 'what' children are learning to acknowledging 'how' children learn - primarily through playing and exploring ("have a go"), through active learning ("keep trying"), and through creating and thinking critically ("having their own ideas and making links"). The kindergarten teacher is available to meet regularly with parents and invites parents to contribute to their child's folder by telling staff about significant changes and developments that have happened at home, for example, learning to ride a bicycle, or the arrival of a new sibling. Parents are given an age-appropriate written assessment of their child each year.

3. The Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements

The EYFS provides comprehensive guidance on maintaining a safe and healthy indoor and outside environment, on ensuring enough staff are suitably trained and supported, and provides detailed information on all necessary policies and procedures for all early years settings. All staff have appropriate training in these statutory and welfare areas, and continually update it. School policies are also available on our website.

A copy of the EYFS may be downloaded from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework-->

[2](#)

Birthdays

“A star shines bright upon this day,
Altho’ the night has flown away.
The star beams falling to the earth,
Scatter their light on your day of birth.”

Ann Druitt

Birthdays are special for every child, and for the family of every child. Parents are invited to participate in the celebration by joining the whole kindergarten for a simple pedagogical birthday story. Children in the kindergarten may draw birthday cards for the birthday child. Together, parents and teacher discuss when would be a suitable day and time to celebrate each child’s birthday. Parents are invited to share a sentence or two about their child’s birth, coming into uprightness, walking, first words, and special events in their child’s life. This is kept succinct so that the birthday child is not overwhelmed by the attention, and their classmates can maintain their focus on what is being said.

Birthdays that take place during holidays are celebrated on our return to school. All birthdays are celebrated on or after the day, not before. Children are often delighted and proud to celebrate their ‘school birthday’, which provides an occasion where the children become aware of their growing years.

Festivals

Festivals form an important part of the kindergarten year. The main festivals celebrated in kindergarten are Michaelmas, Christmas, Easter and St John’s Day. Other festivals celebrated include Harvest, Martinmas (in November), Advent, Candlemas (in February) and Whitsun (in May or June).

Children in kindergarten are from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. In consultation and with help from parents, family festivals celebrated in kindergarten include Chanukah, Diwali, Eid-al-Adha, Thanksgiving, Santa Lucia, Wesak, Kings Day, Carnival, the Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Jewish New Years and the beginning and end of Ramadan. These festivals are celebrated according to the cultures of the families in kindergarten each year and the local community around the school area.

Families are invited to join us for some of these festivals. Other festivals are planned to take place within the routine of the kindergarten morning. Parents are informed of these in the Calendar of Events or through email communications.

Eurythmy

“Eurythmy” is an art of movement developed by Rudolf Steiner and his wife Marie Steiner. It has been developed pedagogically for the Waldorf curriculum, socially for the workplace and other activities, artistically for the stage and curatively for the medical field. It is an art form that breathes life into the soul and the limbs of all who do it and helps to align and harmonize the three essential forces of Thinking, Feeling and Willing in the human being. The natural gesture of young children is one of free movement. Eurythmy is brought to the children through a special eurythmy circle of gestures, speech and movement. The children learn how to speak through their limbs, sing through their soul and become aware of one another in their environment. This ability will support them in becoming wholesome individuals later in life in every social context.” Michèle Hunter, school eurythmist. Michèle visits both kindergartens most weeks for a session.

Eurythmy therapy: This is therapeutic movement which the school anthroposophical medical consultant may recommend for an individual child, in full consultation with the parents. This is a one or two-to-one weekly session with the eurythmy therapist over the course of a half-term or term and then reviewed. Parents will be invited to speak to their child’s teacher if it is felt that this form of therapy may be suitable for their child. The school is supported by Sally Lake-Edwards, eurythmy therapist.

Early Years Staff

Britain has a long heritage of early years education including the work of the pioneering MacMillan sisters who worked in the east end of London onwards. Our practice is enriched by the variety of trainings our staff have undertaken, and continue to study, which include Steiner-Waldorf, Froebel, Reggio Emilia, Montessori and state training. More recent training and conference participation include Emmi Pikler in the Respectful Care of the Young Child from birth to five training. There is a strong culture of mentoring and co-mentoring which all staff throughout the school participate in. We work out of anthroposophy (see page 3), an understanding of the development of the human being, and in particular how it informs our knowledge of the young child. Members of the staff team regularly attend workshops and national conferences led by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship.

Staff team September 2023 to July 2024

We have five members of staff in our team. Kindergarten staff attend a weekly Early Years pedagogical meeting. All staff attend regular in-service training (Inset) days at school. They are invited to attend a monthly whole school faculty meeting, and the College study each week. Maria is a member of the College of Teachers, and attend weekly Trustee/College meetings. Staff are supported by the London Borough of Hounslow Early Years team who provide a range of statutory training including First Aid, Food Hygiene, Safeguarding & Child Protection and Health & Safety. The staff currently comprise:

Maria da Costa: Kindergarten Teacher/Manager

University Degree in Early Childhood Education (Lisbon) and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), level 6

Diploma in Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Studies, level 5

Maria has a passion for children. She trained as a mainstream kindergarten teacher in 2010, studying both in Lisbon and in Milan. In Lisbon she taught both in mainstream nursery and kindergarten. Maria discovered about the Waldorf pedagogy at university, and in 2011, she moved to London to learn more about the pedagogy and did an internship/volunteered at kindergarten in The St Michael Steiner School. She then took the Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Training Course in London, while working in kindergarten, and became one of the kindergarten teachers at our school.

Deepa Bracchi - Kindergarten Teacher

Diploma in Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Studies, level 5
BA in Social Science for Development, Cooperation and Peace and MA in Peace Studies, Development, Cooperation & Mediation (Pisa)

Deepa was a student at the Waldorf School in Oriago in Venice. She has worked for several non-profit organizations in Italy, coordinating school peace projects as part of her role. She then worked as a nanny for children of different ages, in families around the world. Her personal quest has always been to find respectful and nourishing ways to foster the development of children. She completed the Diploma in Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Studies in 2021. From September 2019 to July 2022, Deepa worked as kindergarten assistant and kindergarten cover teacher at Greenwich Steiner school. Last September 2022, she joined our school, where she covered for a teacher and assisted in the cottage. From September she will be the kindergarten teacher in the cottage.

Keesha Malcolm - Kindergarten Assistant and Afternoon Session team

Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Studies, level 3
Montessori Early Childhood international Diploma, level 3
Steiner Waldorf Teacher Training Seminar

Keesha has been teaching since 2011, first graduating as a Montessori Teacher in London. She worked in private nurseries and schools as a Parent & Child group leader, Early Years Manager and Reception teacher, and in a secondary school as a P.E. teacher. She was born in London and is married with three children. She was brought up in the Catholic faith and later became Muslim in college. Keesha loves the Steiner approach and working and serving young children and their families. Her favourite quote is: *“Service to others is the rent you pay here on earth”*. (Mohammad Ali). Keesha joined our team in 2017 and has been working as an assistant and as a teacher.

Angelica Velasco-Hawkins - Kindergarten Assistant and Afternoon Session team

Holistic Baby and Childcare Diploma, level 3 (Emerson college)
BA Social Pedagogy (Aberdeen)
Diploma: Camphill programme (International Training Circle of the Medical Section of the School of Spiritual Science)

In 2015, Angelica started attending the Parent & Child group at The St Michael Steiner School with her son. She felt in love with the school community and the environment. After volunteering in the Parent & Child group, she worked in the kindergarten in the afternoon care and later working as an assistant. In Waldorf education, Angelica has found a new path and enrolled herself in the Holistic Baby and Child Care Diploma course at Emerson College. This year, Angelica continues to be part of the early years team, assisting in the kindergarten.

Velika Dimova - P&C Group Leader and Afternoon Session team

Holistic Baby and Childcare Diploma, level 3 (Emerson college)
BA degree in History of Art/ BA degree in Pedagogy (Bulgaria)
Sun Pedagogy training (Bulgaria)

Velika was born in Bulgaria, she is half Russian. When she was 18 she started exploring different pedagogical approaches, such as the Sun Pedagogy and Montessori approach. But there was no other approach that smittened her so deeply such as the Waldorf Steiner approach. Since then her passion for holistic education only grew bigger. Following the universal paths, they led Velika and her family to The St Michael Steiner School in 2021. Velika graduated this year from the Holistic Baby and Child Care training and found her vocation as a Parent&Child group leader and EY practitioner.

EY Child Protection: Maria da Costa

EY Health & Safety: Maria da Costa

Special Educational Needs and Disability for the school (SEND): Julian Coxon

Paediatric First Aid: All staff

The Role of the Teacher and Assistant

The task of the adult in the kindergarten is to provide a healthy role model for the children who are learning through imitation. The teacher (known in state schools as the 'Key Person') generally leads main activities including ring time, snack and story time, and assistants will often lead practical activities such as snack preparation and other artistic and craft activities. The teacher and assistants build up strong relationships with the children and make efforts to get to know all the children and their families well, many of whom have siblings throughout the school.

The Wider Community

The School is recognized and registered with Independent Schools Association (ISA) and the the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF). Students may undertake yearly 'Assistantship Training' in the early years and staff give talks and welcome visits from students on both Waldorf and mainstream Early Years training courses. The school has a positive working relationship with the Early Years team in Hounslow Education Department, through statutory and non-statutory training and advisory visits.

The school anthroposophical medical consultant visits the school regularly. She sees children whom teachers, in consultation with their parents, put forward. Early in the summer term the school medical consultant will see all the older kindergarten children, as part of the admissions procedure for Class 1.

The kindergarten was inspected by Hounslow Early Years department in November 2012 and gained registration for the Early Education Entitlement funding.

Section 2: Parent Partnerships

Parents and carers as Partners

The relationship between child, parent/carer and teacher begins before a child joins kindergarten at an initial meeting, and develops into a partnership that is crucial in enabling the healthy development of every child.

Parents Evenings/Afternoons

Termly parents evenings or afternoons provide an opportunity for parents in kindergarten to meet each other and learn more about the School's ethos and ways of working with the children. Refreshments and artistic activities may be followed by:

- ✓ a talk on aspects of child development
- ✓ a study together
- ✓ notices about what is happening in the Early Years /School
- ✓ Questions and an opportunity to share ideas
- ✓ A guest colleague / speaker (a lower school teacher or specialist subject teacher).

These times are an opportunity to create a supportive circle of adults around the kindergarten groups. Dates are provided in the Calendar of Events on the School website. Please attend if you can.

Communications about individual children take place in the following ways:

One-to-One meetings with parents/carers

Please make appointments to meet with your child's teacher at least once a year, or termly, to discuss your child's development. If you are worried about any aspect of your child's development, it is important that you tell staff. Equally, if staff need to share information with parents, a meeting will be requested.

Home Visits

Home visits can help in the child's settling-in process. Please feel free to invite your child's teacher, she will let you know when she is available. A strong relationship between the teacher, the child and their parents/carers helps children feel secure in their school life.

Other channels of communication

- ✓ Brief chats are possible at pick-up and drop-off, but for more in-depth conversations, please book a time with your child's teacher;
- ✓ Telephone calls: Your child's teacher may be available by telephone for urgent matters in the evening. If the phone is not answered, please do leave a message and she will respond as soon as possible;
- ✓ Short text messages - please make sure we always have your current mobile number;
- ✓ Letter and email.

What do we ask of parents/carers?

- ✓ We ask you to work towards understanding the principles that lie behind Steiner Waldorf Education so that you deepen your understanding of what you have chosen for your child and can give the teachers wholehearted support in their work. Parent education workshops are held during the year.
- ✓ Please bring your child to kindergarten on time. We offer a flexible start time (8:25 to 8.35am). If you are late in the morning please let your child's teacher know. If there has been an emergency in the morning and your child has not had breakfast, let us know and we can arrange a small snack for your child on arrival. When late, your child misses the beginning of creative play and crafts, and often finds settling in harder, as games have been established by their peers.
- ✓ Please dress your child in suitable clothing for the time of year - see clothing section.
- ✓ Please make sure your child has had enough sleep. Kindergarten-age children usually need around twelve hours of sleep a day. A tired child may not enjoy their time in kindergarten. Please tell us if your child has sleepless nights so we can provide a restful space during the morning if needed.
- ✓ Do not bring your child to school if they are very tired/sniffly/unwell. A child who is unwell will not enjoy their kindergarten morning, and may sometimes become reluctant to return to school on other days.
- ✓ Your child will only be able to leave school with the adults named on your consent form. If your child is to be collected by another adult, please ensure that you introduce them to your child's teacher.
- ✓ Please arrive in good time to collect your child when they have finished kindergarten for the day and leave the premises promptly unless you have a legitimate reason for being at school, ensuring your child is properly supervised.
- ✓ Please limit your child's exposure to television, videos, DVDs, computers, electronic games, cinema and recorded music. It would be of great benefit if they were kept away from them entirely, until an older age.
- ✓ Do be open and honest in your communication with the teachers about your child's health, family circumstances and anything else that may affect their behaviour. This will remain confidential. Please keep your child's teacher informed of any changes in the home situation of your child, so that we can be as understanding as possible during the kindergarten sessions.
- ✓ Any difficulties with your ability to pay school fees need to be communicated without delay to the school Bursar, Marine, by telephoning 020 8890 6719 or emailing bursar@stmichaelsteiner.com/finance@stmichaelsteiner.com.
- ✓ Please familiarise yourself with this handbook, together with the main School Parents' Handbook, and with the School's rules, policies and procedures. By respecting and following them yourself, and encouraging your child to do so, you will help with the smooth running of the school.

Class Contacts

In each class, one or two parents are designated Class Contacts. This year, our Class Contacts are:

- Amelia (Ria's mother) and Carrie (Olivia's mother) - School kindergarten
- Martyna (Jan's mother) and Beisan (Gaia's mother) - Cottage kindergarten

The role of Class Contacts is to liaise with the teacher and parents of the class on matters of general interest or information. For example, teachers may ask the Class Contacts to remind parents about a parents' meeting or forthcoming festival. Class Contacts should not be involved in matters relating to an individual child - these should be directed to the child's teacher.

Parent Education

From time to time, we provide workshops for parents and talks by experienced educationalists and those working in related fields and parents are encouraged to participate in these events.

Rudolf Steiner House at 35 Park Road, London NW1 offers a regular, termly programme of courses, talks, conferences, theatre performances and gallery space, as well as a biodynamic café, large lending library and bookshop. Full details may be found at: <http://www.rsh.anth.org.uk/>.

Recommended Reading List

Early Years Information Files: The school has a library of reference books available for parents to browse. The file includes copies of Newsletter contributions over the years, as well as other articles about child development, play, outdoor life, and various aspects of parenting. Articles may be photocopied for a nominal fee paid at reception.

The school has a small collection of books about Anthroposophy, Steiner Waldorf Education, parenting and other related subjects. These are available on request for parents to borrow from the Parent Library. The following and many other books about Steiner education are available from the library and bookshop at Rudolf Steiner House (see above) and <http://www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk/>.

Books on Steiner Waldorf Education

Waldorf Education, C. Clouder and M. Rawson. Floris Books

Education Towards Freedom, F. Carlgren. Lanthorn Press

School as a Journey, T. Finser. Hawthorn Press

Ready to Learn, M. Rawson and M. Rose. Hawthorn Press

Early Childhood

You are your Child's First Teacher, R. Baldwin Dancy. Celestial Arts

The Genius of Play, S. Jenkinson. Hawthorn Press

Well, I Wonder - Childhood in the Modern World and *Under the Sky*, both by S. Schweizer, Sophia Books

Free to Learn, L. Oldfield. Hawthorn Press

Managing Screen Time: Raising Balanced Children in the Digital Age, Edmond Schoorel

Simplicity Parenting, K. Payne, Ballentine Books

A Guide to Child Health, M. Glöckler and W. Goebel. Floris Books

The Incarnating Child, J. Salter. Hawthorn Press

In a Nutshell, N. Foster. WECAN publishing

Creative Play for your baby, J. Nicol & C. Clouder, Gaia Books
Creative Play for your toddler, J. Nicol & C. Clouder, Gaia Books

Practical Activities and Festivals

All Year Round, A. Druitt, C. Fynes-Clinton, M. Rowling. Hawthorn Press
The Children's Year, C. Fynes-Clinton, M. Rowling, S. Cooper. Hawthorn Press
Earthwise, C. Petrash. Floris Books
African-Caribbean Celebrations: Celebrating Customs and Traditions, G. Johnson and C. Glanville. Hawthorn books
The Birthday Book: Celebrations for Everyone, A. Druitt et al. Hawthorn Press
Festivals Together: A Guide to Multi-Cultural Celebration, S. Fitzjohn, M. Weston & J. Large. Hawthorn Press
The Waldorf Kindergarten Snack Book, L. Hildreth. Bell Pond Books

Lifestyle and Child Development

Phases of Child Development, B. Lievegoed. Floris Books
Who's Bringing them Up?, M. Large. Hawthorn Press
Fool's Gold, E. Miller. Alliance for Childhood
Free your Child's True Potential, M. Rawson. Hodder & Stoughton
The Soul Of Discipline, K. Payne. Ballentine Books

Books about Anthroposophy by Rudolf Steiner

Anthroposophy in Everyday Life. Rudolf Steiner Press
Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy. Anthroposophic Press
The Spirit of the Waldorf School. Anthroposophic Press
Understanding the Human Being. Rudolf Steiner Press
Rudolf Steiner - a biography by Rudi Lissau

Emmi Pikler/Pikler Inspired Books

Unfolding Of Infants' Natural Gross Motor Skills, E. Pikler. Pikler Institute
Dance with me in the Heart: The Adults Guide to Great Infant-Parent Relationships, P. Brownlee. The New Zealand Playcentre Federation

Websites with useful resources include:

<http://www.simplicityparenting.com/> for advice about parenting

<http://www.steinerwaldorf.org/> for more information about Steiner Waldorf schools in the U.K.

<http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/> supports policies and practices for a healthy, unhurried childhood, with lots of links to interesting and relevant articles.

www.pikler.co.uk for information about this work in the U.K.

Section 3: Practical Issues

How to apply for a Kindergarten Place

Prospective parents should fill in a Kindergarten Application Form (available on the web site:

https://stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Application-Form-Kindergarten-6_19.pdf or from Reception). Please fill in the form with as much detail as possible. The more you let us know about your child, the more able we are to help them settle into the group, and meet their needs.

Applications should be submitted, together with the application fee of £50 (cheques payable to the St Michael Steiner School Ltd.) to:

The Admissions Secretary
The St Michael Steiner School
Park Road
Hanworth Park
London TW13 6PN

On receipt of an application, fee and all relevant reports (if asked for), the Administrator will contact you to arrange a time for yourselves and your child to meet the kindergarten teachers. This is an opportunity for you to ask questions about the kindergarten pedagogy and our school. Your child may draw or use craft materials and play in the kindergarten while the adults speak together. The meetings usually last around 45 minutes.

Children may join kindergarten the term after their third birthday. Depending on the child's biography to date (attending childminders, nursery, at home with parents, etc) some children benefit from joining kindergarten on turning three years of age and others a little later between their 3rd and 4th birthday. Children may benefit from attending Parent and Child groups for little longer for example. It may mean they take less time to settle into a more independent kindergarten life when they do join. There are "Kindergarten ready" articles available and these matters can be discussed before or at the initial meeting with the early years teachers so each child benefits from the best start to kindergarten life for her/him. Three year olds usually attend for a minimum of three mornings, although two mornings may be offered. The main intake of children is in September, with a smaller one in January. If there are spaces, children may join throughout the academic year, however children are admitted in the summer term only in exceptional cases.

If the kindergarten groups are full, your child's name will be placed on a waiting list. When a space arises, children are accepted from the waiting list in the following order:

- a. Siblings
- b. Age of child (oldest children are accepted first, subject to their wish to enter the Lower School)
- c. Attendance at Parent & Child groups
- d. Place on the waiting list

Upon acceptance of a place at the school, the deposit must be paid (currently £1,000, this may be paid in instalments). This secures the child's place.

Finances

The school is dependent entirely on school fees being paid. Fees are kept at a minimum to enable as many families as possible to join the school community. Please read the main Parents' Handbook for full information about finances.

Early Education Entitlement (formerly Nursery Education grant)

Children are eligible for the Early Education Entitlement for 15 hours/week (age three and four) from the London Borough of Hounslow. The grant is applied from the term after a child turns three up until the term during which the child turns five years old. The grant is accessed on your behalf each term by school and your invoices will state how many hours of grant your child is entitled to, followed by the amount of fees payable. Please note that absences from kindergarten of more than two weeks could affect the free entitlement place.

Bursary

The school has a bursary scheme which can assist parents with school fees. It is means tested and applications are invited in February each year for the following September start. The Bursary Scheme is not available in conjunction with any other bursary offered by the School or grant offered by the Local Authority. Parents are expected to honour their financial commitments as communicated on the bottom of any invoice they receive from school, without the need for the school to issue a reminder for payment. If you have any further questions with regards to finances, please ring our finance number: 0208 890 6719, or email: finance@stmichaelsteiner.com.

Clothing

Children do not have a school uniform, however for pedagogical reasons children's clothing should be free from logos or cartoon characters. Practical clothing encourages independence and helps children feel confident and skilled.

The kindergarten and outside play are often messy! Whilst aprons are provided for painting and baking activities, parents should provide their child with a full set of waterproof clothing for outdoor play. Clothes can and do get stained by paint, glue, clay, mud and grass, so please do not dress your child in unsuitable or precious clothing. Children anxious about keeping their clothing clean are often reluctant to join in activities, limiting their opportunities for work, learn and play.

Please ensure all your child's clothing is clearly named, including footwear. *Many children don't recognise their own clothing.* It may help children to have a limited 'school wardrobe'.

All children should have labelled cloth bag (named on the outside) containing spare clothing. A complete set of everything is needed, plus a plastic bag for wet clothes.

Your child will need:

- **Slippers** with enclosed heels and toes (not mules) and thin, non-slip soles. Please try to find plain colours (no logos). Slippers should be easy to wear and should fit well, so please check for foot-growth regularly;
- **1 strong waterproof jacket with hood**, either with a zip-in warm fleece lining, or big enough to fit over a warm winter jacket for when the weather turns cold.

Please use this as your child's main coat and do not bring other outdoor coats/jackets to school;

- 1 pair **strong waterproof dungarees**/over-trousers to remain at school;
- 1 pair **welly boots or snow boots** to remain at school, big enough for thick warm socks or welly warmers in winter. Snow boots are a good alternative in the winter months, when feet can get very cold in wellingtons;
- **Warm hat, gloves and scarf** for autumn/winter;
- **Sun hat** and sun cream for sunny days, to be applied before coming to kindergarten;;
- **Outdoor shoes** should be flat and practical (when wellies are not worn), to enable children to run, jump and climb freely and safely.

Settling your child in Kindergarten

Parents/carers are encouraged to stay around at the beginning to help your child feel comfortable in the kindergarten. The following is a suggested starting routine for your child to enable them to feel secure in their new surroundings.

Day 1: Parent stays for part of the morning, you may help your child to get acquainted with the layout, where toys are, toilets, etc, and both can share and enjoy the rhythm of the morning.

Day 2: Leave your child for some time, if your child is happy, ensuring you tell your child and staff when you are leaving.

Day 3: Subsequent days - extend separation time for your child, until they are confident to attend a full session happily.

Some children may need shorter mornings during settling in time and the teachers will discuss options with you.

The teacher will work with you to enable your child to settle in their own way in the kindergarten. Very occasionally, a child may not settle smoothly and we may suggest that they try again in one or two terms, when they are older and more able to make the transition from home to school.

Home visits help to build a bond between home and school. Please speak to your child's teacher to arrange a mutually convenient time, ideally within the first term.

Toys in kindergarten

When a child joins kindergarten, a transitional object/toy may help in the settling in process, for example a piece of cloth, or a special soft toy. This object may play an important part in your child's developing trust and confidence in being away from home for the first time. These toys may also be helpful if your child is going through a difficult emotional time or unsettled period at home. Please speak with your child's teacher if this is the case. The teachers will work with you to help your child settle into the kindergarten routines.

As part of creative discipline, children should not bring other home toys to school (except transitional objects - see above). Home toys often distract the children from

playing with kindergarten materials and can cause difficulty with sharing with other children. If toys are brought (e.g. to take on a play date after school), do tell the teacher who may keep the toy 'safe' until home time.

Arrivals and Departures

Access to school

Please use the pedestrian gate for all pedestrian access to school. For security reasons the inner school gates will be locked during school hours. Open from 8 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. for drop off and at 3 p.m. for pick up. Please buzz reception to leave the school when the gate is locked.

Arrival in Kindergarten

Please bring your children to the kindergarten and sign them in, and help them with their shoes and coats, etc. This is also the time to pass on any urgent information about your child to the child's teacher. Over the year, we start kindergarten both outdoors or in the kindergarten room, depending on the weather/seasons and activities of the day. When your child's kindergarten is starting outside, please ensure you leave your child dressed in appropriate clothing for the weather.

Signing in and out

Please fill in the signing-in and out sheet located at the entrance of kindergarten. These may also be used to confirm if your child is to be collected by another adult. At pick-up time your child's teacher or another member of staff may need to speak to you about some aspect of your child's day.

Whilst from time to time emergencies occur, which may make you late for pick up, please inform your child's teacher. Please note that for persistent late collections beyond 15 minutes, financial penalties may apply.

Parking

Please park in the public car park to the right of the school drive, or on Park Road outside school, and please give due consideration to the school's neighbours. Parent's cars are not allowed onto school premises unless permission has been sought.

Next Steps

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. Children with special educational needs may not join class 1 if their needs cannot be met at our school. Summer born (June, July and August) children will often stay in kindergarten for the year after their sixth birthday and begin Class 1 when they are seven years old. The kindergarten teachers will meet with parents and together a decision is made for the best for the child. The eurythmist, class teachers and school medical consultant are also part of this process. A 'Big children's club' weekly session is usually arranged during the spring and summer term for the older children in kindergarten, when special crafts and activities are undertaken in a social group. Children from other schools and kindergartens also join the school in Class 1, subject to space.

Section 4: Policies and Procedures

A list of all school policies and procedures is found in the main Parents' Handbook available to view on our website: https://stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Parents-handbook-2023_2024.pdf.

Creative Discipline and Behaviour

All children learn and grow in their understanding of socially appropriate and desirable behaviour. During the kindergarten years, the child is developing into a social being and one of the tasks of the kindergarten teacher is to create and maintain an environment where the child can imitate and develop socially acceptable behaviour in small groups and whole class situations. As adults supporting the children's development, we encourage:

- respect and care of self, others, and the environment
- the development of self-regulation
- the development of high self-esteem and self confidence

In the kindergarten environment children feel secure and safe through rhythm and routine in daily activities, and the teacher and assistants endeavour to be role models worthy of imitation. We have clear and consistent boundaries, although each child is treated individually and according to their age and stage of development.

Each new child comes to kindergarten on the basis of a term's trial, with a discussion/review at the half term. If at the end of this term the child has not settled, the trial may be extended if the teachers deem it appropriate, and a plan of action created to help the child and look at specific needs and issues alongside our colleagues, the College of Teachers, and the parents. If the child has been at kindergarten longer and a problem arises, every effort will be made with parent support to reintegrate the child into the group. If we are unable to provide the necessary support to meet the child's developmental needs, we may ask the child to leave, but this would only be after all other avenues have been explored, both in house and outside agencies.

In house: Early years practitioners
 College of Teachers

In-house therapists: Eurythmy therapist
 School anthroposophical medical advisor

Outside agencies: Hounslow Early Years Advisory team
 Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Advisory Service

Screens and electronic media

Generally, Steiner Waldorf teachers prefer that young children do not watch screens including iPads, mobile telephones, screens in cars, televisions, computers and laptops for games or other digital activities. There is plenty of research data available to confirm the ill effects on the physical, emotional and social development of young children from screen-time. Teachers strive to enable lively pictures in the child's imagination with stories, circles and puppet shows, and these efforts are contradicted by television /film and games images. The children also mimic gestures they have passively absorbed.

However, we do realise and understand that families contain complexities that are difficult to negotiate, please do your best to select and limit viewing.

We would like parents to support us by not allowing the children to watch or use screens in the mornings before coming to school, and preferably also not during the week. This helps the whole group in terms of sharing wholesome play. Kindergarten toys are simple to allow the child to fill in the details with their imagination.

If your child is used to a heavy screen diet, don't despair! It may be easier than it sounds to change your family routine. Many parents have discovered that one-time TV addicts have found a wealth of positive things to do in the creative and supportive atmosphere of a Steiner school community. Speak to your child's teacher if you need some suggestions. There are also a wide range of books with ideas and activities in our book list.

Safeguarding Children

The St Michael Steiner School strives to create an environment where learning, truth, justice, respect, spirituality and community are promoted. Consequently, the overall aim of this policy is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our care, regardless of age, class, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. In situations where child abuse is suspected, our paramount responsibility is to the child. We recognise that everyone who comes into contact with the children in our school in their everyday work has a duty to safeguard and protect them and should demonstrate commitment and priorities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Our policy applies to all adults with whom our children come into contact with, be they staff, trustees, parents, teacher trainees and volunteers.

If staff are worried about the safety or welfare of a child within school we have a legal duty and responsibility to act on our concerns. Some signs of possible abuse and neglect may include:

- significant changes in a child's behaviour;
- deterioration in a child's general well-being;
- unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect;
- children's comments which give cause for concern;
- any reasons to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting, for example in the child's home;
- inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff, or any other person working with the children. For example: inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images.
- suspected FGM will be reported to the police.

Wherever possible we will discuss our concerns with parents and carers in the first instance, and if necessary, make a referral to Children's Social Care in Hounslow.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of Child Protection or Safeguarding, please speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or one of the Deputies (DDSL):

Maria da Costa: DDSL Early Years mariacosta@stmichaelsteiner.com 07730187635

Julian Coxon: DDSL Lower School juliancoxon@stmichaelsteiner.com 07792 325402

Amanda Bell: DSL and High School amandabell@stmichaelsteiner.com 07525 242883

Please use phone numbers only for urgent communications outside school hours.

Support and advice for Early Years:

Hounslow Children's Services Front Door: 020 8583 6600 (option 2), email: childrensocialcare@hounslow.gov.uk

Hounslow Early Help Hub : 020 8583 6653, email: earlyhelphub@hounslow.gov.uk

Specific Educational Needs

Our kindergarten considers all children to be unique and that every child has individual needs. Our kindergarten admits children with specific educational needs whenever this is possible, given the specific needs of the child, the needs of the whole class group, and the nature of our provision.

The Steiner Early Childhood curriculum is holistic and concentrates on the child as an individual, putting them central in their ideals particularly when working with the parents on shared perceptions of their needs, abilities and developmental stages. We hope that our Early Years curriculum will enable all children to achieve their full potential. Every endeavour will be taken to accommodate the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs of each child.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): We do admit children with Education and Health Care plans (EHCPs), as far as the needs of the children can be met in our kindergarten, and may employ extra staff to ensure that the child's needs are met. Individual Education Plans are created for children who need extra support during a specific period of time in the kindergarten. The school SENCo Julian Coxon supports the Early Years team in this area of their work.

It is a requirement that parents of children who have additional needs meet with the Early Years teachers termly to review and plan the continued support of their child together.

Extra support available: We draw on the expertise of the school anthroposophical medical consultant and Hounslow Early Years Advisors /SENDS.

Disability Discrimination

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, in our Early Years department we will:

- think ahead and anticipate what we may need to do for a disabled child so that they can be included in the life of the setting as fully as possible, for example, checking policies, such as an admissions policy to ensure we do not discriminate against disabled children;

- take advice about the management of a condition and consider whether we may be able to adapt routine procedures to accommodate a child;

consider how we can provide support to include children with disabilities in the full range of activities, for example, staff training, changes to the layout of the physical environment;

liaise with parents and relevant professionals to best meet the needs of each child.

Inclusion

The St Michael Steiner School is working towards being an equal opportunities employer. The kindergartens are committed to making Steiner Waldorf education available to all who choose it regardless of religious or cultural beliefs, ability or social and financial background, and that each child and adult is valued as an individual without racial or gender stereotyping.

In kindergarten, we want children to grow up knowing that all people are of equal worth whatever their ethnic origin, culture, religion, language or ability; we want the children to respect and value the differences between people and to celebrate the richness there is in diversity. Together in our community we look to find ways of celebrating our common humanity, of finding unity in our diversity. We work with parents and their extended families to support us.

We prepare our children for society by helping them develop empathy. Our curriculum aims to create the conditions for this, for true and genuine interest in the other. If we, the teachers can cultivate this feeling of respect for and interest in one another, the children in our care will learn by our example.

We are fully committed to the active promotion of equality of opportunity for all children, families and staff in the kindergarten. We strive for our kindergartens to be active members of our extended community.

First Aid

First Aid is emergency care given to an injured person (in order to minimize injury and future disability) before professional medical care is available. Teachers and other staff are expected to use their best endeavour at all times, particularly in emergencies, to secure the welfare of pupils. In general, consequences of taking no action are likely to be more serious than those of trying to assist in an emergency.

At The St Michael Steiner School every effort is made to minimize the risk of accidents and carry out regular risk assessments but we recognise that accidents may still occur. The First Aider present at any accident will deal with the accident and treat any injuries as required. A First Aider will always accompany children on walks off the school premises.

All of our early years staff have up-to-date Paediatric First Aid training.

Grievance/Complaints procedure

In the event of a complaint by a parent or member of staff please, if possible, first contact the teacher responsible. If parents remain unsatisfied then they may follow the 'Parents' Complaints Policy and Procedure'. All complaints will be treated in confidence.

“The Healthy Social Life is found
When in the mirror of each human soul
The whole community finds its reflection,
And when in the community
The virtue of each one is living.”

This is the motto of social ethic. Rudolf Steiner, 1920

If you wish to contact Ofsted:	If you wish to contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate:
Telephone: (general) 0300 123 1231 Telephone: (concerns) 0300 123 4666 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Address: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted Address: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD	Telephone: (general) 02076000100 Telephone: (concerns) 02076000100 Email: info@isi.net Website: https://www.isi.net Address: CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Contact information:

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 Tel: 020 8893 1299
 Find us on Facebook and Instagram

Bursar: bursar@stmichaelsteiner.com
 Finance: finance@stmichaelsteiner.com
 Tel: 0208 890 6719

Admin: admin@stmichaelsteiner.com

A registered charity no 1094960 and a company limited by guarantee no 043643