



The St Michael Steiner School  
**Newsletter**  
February & March 2024



## Parent and Child group - 'drop-in' on Fridays

Our Friday Parent and Child group session is now open for drop-in sessions.

No booking required, sign in and pay at reception every Friday.  
(Contactless accepted)

Sessions are also available throughout the week, contact Velika, to pre-book in advance:

velikadimova@stmichaelsteiner.com

For more info and dates:

<https://stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk/parent-child-groups/>



## Calendar

### Spring Term 2024

9 March (Saturday) - **AGM** (2 - 3.30pm) & open day

14 March (Thursday) - open morning

21 March (Thursday) - last day of term

- **End-of-Term Festival** 2.45 - 4pm,  
Landmark Arts Centre, Teddington

### Summer Term 2024

15 April (Monday) - First Day of Term

25 - 26 April - **Class 12's play: *The Importance of Being Earnest***. Cockpit Theatre.

6 May (Monday) - May Day Bank Holiday (no school)

11 May (Saturday) - open day

16 May (Thursday) - open morning

24 May (Friday) - INSET day (no school)

24 - 25 May (Friday & Saturday) - **Parents' Conference**

*Half-term break: 27-31 May*

3 June (Monday) - back to School

20 June (Thursday) - open morning

22 June (Saturday) - **Summer Fair** and open day

12 July (Friday) - last day of the school year

## Thoughts before Easter

It's early Spring. The light has returned to the mornings and evenings, pale and hopeful, beaming through the still bare branches of trees at whose feet little crowds of snowdrops gather. Daffodils push up through the cold earth looking for the sun. The full blossom of May and the warm days of June still seem far off. Now is the time of that great heave of Nature, rousing itself after Winter's sleep. Every leaf waits, tightly packed in its bud, ready.

Isn't it something, when you stop and think about it, that this happens without fail every year? This mighty returning wave of greenery rolls across the earth and perhaps as easily as we breathe or our hearts beat, each tree unfolds itself to the sky.

Perhaps it's no wonder that in ancient times people recognized this annual miracle in great festivals. The Greeks, in the Mysteries of Eleusis, at the beginning of Spring, celebrated the return of the goddess Persephone from the underworld.

The story goes that Persephone had been out picking flowers when Hades, lord of the underworld, king of the dead, kidnapped her and stole her down beneath the earth. Winter then reigned and nothing grew until Persephone's mother, Demeter, found her daughter and brought her back to the light. But having eaten the fruit in the underworld, Persephone was doomed to return for a part of every year. And so, over the Winter months, nothing grows. Then, each Spring, she returns, spreading her veil of life over the woods and meadows.

In celebrating this event, the Greeks, like all other foundational cultures, recognised a connection between the natural, human and spiritual worlds.

In the Easter story we are presented with a similar image: a God dies, nailed to a bare wooden cross; he's sealed in a tomb of rock, he goes into the underworld... and then returns, bringing back life not only to the natural world, but also to the human soul.

So we're invited at this time of year to think about renewal and rebirth in Nature, in ourselves and in society.

It was Rudolf Steiner's intention that Waldorf education should be a force of renewal in a crumbling world. After the destruction of the First World War and the materialism of the 19th century, he sought through education to sow the seeds for a more human future.

Children come into the world full of curiosity. They want to discover it, know it, participate in it. How we present things to them as teachers and guardians can either open up this process or shut it down. From the way in which we speak to our children or set them examples, will they feel that the world is already 'complete', decided and indifferent to them? Or will they learn that they are actually responsible co-creators of the evolving world around them?

Rudolf Steiner encouraged the teachers in the first Waldorf school not to teach the children using lots of fixed concepts and ideas but to use lively, mobile, imaginative examples as much as possible; to characterise, describe and invite playful participation. In this way, we don't hand the children down pre-packaged 'ready-meals' of information but invite them into a process through which they can build meaningful relationships to the world and develop their own agency. Steiner tried to ensure that we wouldn't lead the children down into the grey 'underworld' of fixed and hardened ideas but to plant in them an inner Spring, giving them the flexibility, inventiveness, curiosity and resilience to thaw and rejuvenate the winters of life.

*In the article below, on a theme which very much continues and adds to this discussion, A. C. Harwood, one of the founders of the first Steiner school in the UK, invites us to think about how the answers we give to children's questions can preserve or shut down the child's curiosity about the world. It was published in 1936 in a magazine of Waldorf education called 'Child and Man,' and although it is clear in places that it was written nearly a century ago, its fundamental message still holds true.*

## Children's Questions

Written by A.C. Harwood

From about the age of three children begin to be full of questions, and it is sometimes a matter of great difficulty for their parents to find the right answers to them. Every question demands its own individual answer, but it can be of great value, in deciding what answer to give, to have a clear idea of the kind of answer which is required. For it is altogether wrong to imagine that a little child should be given the same kind of answer as would be suitable for a child of eleven or twelve, but in a simpler form.

The range of questions which even young children will ask is truly astonishing. Indeed, in many respects the youngest children will often ask the most fundamental and far-reaching questions - on life and death, and life after death, and many subjects on which their parents have often resigned all hope of definite knowledge. A child of four (to quote an actual example) has asked these questions in the space of a few minutes:

Do men die? Will you die? Shall I die? What do the angels say to you? Are angels shy? Who made God? Do you like God? When you die do you come alive again?

It must come as something of a shock to little children if parents declare themselves unable to answer questions fundamental to a knowledge of human life, and the questions of children must be a challenge to many parents to carry their thinking to the point of becoming clear and certain on many things which they are often content to leave unsettled. There are two things, however, to be noticed about the questions of

little children; they will often ask question after question in rapid succession, as though it were not so much information they were seeking, as the satisfaction of hearing the answering voice; and they will listen with more pleasure to an imperfect answer which is spoken with love and warmth in the voice, than to a complete and final reply given in a matter-of-fact tone. It is, indeed, to a large extent true that when little children pour out their endless questions they are seeking something much deeper than the mere satisfaction of curiosity; they are seeking to bring around them the living tones of the human voice. For the voices which they hear do not remain arrested in their consciousness, as in the case with adults, but penetrate even to those deep unconscious processes which take place in the building up of the physical body. Indeed Rudolf Steiner has shown the exact connections of the sounds of the alphabet with the formation of the different organs of the body; and hence it is that Eurythmy, which expresses the various sounds of language and music in movements of the limbs, is not only an art, but can be used as a means of healing.

It is, therefore, just as much a matter of how you answer little children's questions as of what you answer. Pure, full tones of speech (and modern voices, especially those of intellectual people, are often terribly clipped and dry) not only give a child a feeling of blessing, but help him to form his bodily strength for later life. A child is first nourished by his mother-milk, and then by his mother-tongue.

But as a guide to what kind of answers little children need, it is often to be noticed that a child will supply the answer to his own questions, and not infrequently reject the one given by the adult for another of his own invention. Such answers which children give to themselves as a rule are much more full of fantasy than those which an adult would supply. A child asks: Why does the sun take the water up into the sky? and then adds: Is it for the angels to drink? Or seeing a piece of wire-netting over the funnel of a steam-roller, he asks: Why do they put that netting on it? but immediately adds: It must be to keep the birds from building their nests there.

It is not easy for an adult to copy this wonderful power of fantasy, and a certain sense of intellectual truth may often stand in the way. But it is always good to remember that what little children need is a certain living fantasy in the answers they receive. To offer them logical explanations (however true to a scientific mind) is to give them a stone when they ask for bread.

Sometimes little children's questions arise plainly from their desire to unite themselves with words to the objects around them. A child sees a caterpillar for the first time, and asks: "What is that?" "A caterpillar." "What is a caterpillar?" But what he wants from the second question is not a definition of a caterpillar in ideas, but the joyous affirmation of the reality before him; "That is a caterpillar." "A Spae-woman lives by telling people their fortunes and interpreting their dreams," says the King of Ireland's Son, "that is why she is called a Spae-woman."

When children have passed the age of six or seven, they naturally need much more connected answers to their questions than when they were younger. They wait more consciously for the reply, instead of living in the speech which is the answer. It is at this age, for instance, that children will ask many questions about the heavenly bodies, the nature of the sun and stars, the creation of the world, etc. And ready to supply the answer are numerous Children's Encyclopedias, Newspapers, Science books, and what not, with beautiful diagrams of the Sun, a flaming ball on a black page, many times the size of the earth, or a man cut in half showing the heart like a pump, the lungs like a pair of bellows, the nervous system like a set of telegraph wires, etc. Whether or not these things are in any sense representations of the truth is not for the moment the question: though it is worth noticing that by the time scientific theories reach popular children's books they are often quite out of date, even judged by their own standards.

There will be plenty of time for children to investigate scientific theories at a later age, when they can really understand some of the conceptions on which they are based. For these scientific conceptions arose only at a very definite point in human history, and the mind of a child is not to be compared to the wave of intellectual thinking which historically brought them to birth. A child between seven and twelve or so has in him much more of the piety and luxuriant imagination of the Middle Ages. To him the stars are not vast spheres incredible millions of miles distant in space; he feels their clear shining beauty as something very close to him. The sun is not a huge stationary mass of burning gases; its rising each day fills him with a wonderful feeling of joy and thankfulness. The pictures of the heavenly bodies in mythologies are far truer to children than the distances and dimensions of modern astronomy. The Norse people said that wolves swallowed up the sun at the time of an eclipse, and to a child, who has a fine sense of the devouring quality of darkness, the nature of an eclipse is much better expressed by such an image than by a diagram of revolving shadows. For in an eclipse it is truly as though the wolves devoured the sun, and that "as though" is, after all, the furthest claim made by the true scientist. Newton did not say that the planets are attracted to the earth gravity; but that they move as though they were so attracted, and it is not his fault that men have made a dogma of a hypothesis.

It is, in fact, of real importance not to give a child scientific conceptions on these subjects too soon. They tend to destroy the vivid feeling and imagination proper to this age; and, because they are received before the child has developed the power of following the thoughts on which they are based, they become matters of faith instead of matters of knowledge. Very few people in their adult years have even the will to investigate the mathematics on which is based the Newtonian planetary system or modern atomic theories. In a sense a scientific age is the most credulous of all ages. A thousand years ago a man could at least say: "I see the sun move with my own eyes"; but to-day many a man has to say: "Somebody proved a long time ago that the sun stands still. I forget exactly who it was, and I don't know how he proved it, but it's a fact all the same."

When children begin at this age to ask, How a thing is made? it is worth while considering how much of the true explanation has real meaning for them. There are children's books to describe how everything is made, but from such books children often get a very superficial, it may almost be said glib, impression of the work men have to do in the world. Such works are generally illustrated with photographs which give children a very easy picture of various processes, but very little feeling for the real conditions under which the work is done. A few flashlight pictures of miners hacking at a seam, together with a section of a mine with the cage descending, and a child will soon think he knows all about a coal-mine, and turn to the next page to discover how a gramophone works, or what the Great Wall of China looks like. But there is something extraordinarily superficial, muddled, and uncreative about such a way of acquiring information; it is really far better for children to make their own pictures in their mind's eye from living in descriptions they hear of intense silence under the ground, of men walking to their work for miles in galleries where they cannot go upright, of the dripping of water, etc., etc. In short, they should have some such picture of the inwards of the earth as George Macdonald gives of the interior of a mountain at the beginning of the Princess and Curdie. And, above all, the mine should not be an isolated fact, but a knowledge of mining should come as part of the children's general thoughts at the time, in some connection with chemistry, perhaps, or history or geology.

One of the worst results of children's books of the "How it Works" type is that a child will often collect an extraordinary amount of theoretical information and forget to observe things which come within his own ken. Many children can describe the solar system, but do not know where the full moon rises, or what planets are in the sky. They know a lot about the assembling of a motor-car, but are very vague as to how butter or cheese or soap is made. It is always best to try to keep younger children's questions as to how things are made to those objects which they can really understand and observe, perhaps by themselves making them. Generally speaking, it is much easier to impart information to children too early than tactfully to withhold it until a better season.

But a certain reticence in answering children's questions is of great help in keeping the questioning faculty alive. For it is a sad fact that the power of asking questions only too often fades away as children grow older. It is perhaps a test of whether children's questions have been answered rightly in their younger years to see how profound are the questions they ask when they are older, and if they are readily satisfied with the answers. For by the time they reach a more intellectual understanding towards the age of fourteen they should have a strong desire to probe every question in life to the bottom, and not be lightly satisfied by theory without knowledge. For children of this age there is a deep meaning in that part of the story of Parsifal where, as a young man, he first sees the wounded Knight, but does not ask of him the question he should. Many of the questions which children should have in their hearts at this age will indeed only be answered by life itself. They stand in the threshold of life, and life will answer them; but only if they put to life the right questions.

A. C. Harwood.

# The Firebird

by Evan Guilford-Blake



Class 8 trod the boards at The Musical Museum in Brentford...

Once upon a time, there lived a beautiful and magical Firebird (Aaliya). One day, in the forest, she was captured by the handsome but not very clever Duke (Ismael) and is very clever Horse (Roy). The bad-tempered King of Robindale (Carlos) wanted to get married, so he sent the Duke, his Horse and the Firebird to the Land of Never to find the fair and wise Princess Catherine (Rumi). It all got a little bit complicated from then on to say the least. After a long and tiring journey to the Great Blue Sea, and an encounter with a rather large Lobster (Tom) to find the perfect wedding dress, they all lived happily ever after. Oh, apart from the King of course, who ended up in a pot of boiling oil.

Well done Class 8!

Lisa Harrison





more photos from The Firebird



## Hedgerow planting project

Nearly 900 hedgerow whips were planted at the beginning of February. Over 50 children of ages 6-16 from the St Michael Steiner School with their teachers, supported by the hard work of the tree team worked on the hedge. Parent and child group members, local councillors, council officers and park volunteers braved the cold weather to help. The children worked in their groups digging holes for the whip roots to go into and heeling back the earth in around them to ensure they have the best possible start. This was hard work for the younger children as they jumped up and down on the special planting spades. But with determination and team work they managed.



The winter months are the best time to plant hedgerow whips as the energy of the plant is in the roots. Once planted, in the Spring the sap will rise and the whips will burst into leaf. The hedgerow was planted through a weed membrane and mulched with wood chip to ensure they are given their best start however we were told typically only 1 out of 5 whips survive. The whips were planted in two rows in a zigzag pattern to give the future hedge some thickness.

The hedgerow will provide an additional natural habitat for birds and wildlife on the park; hazel, beech along with other hedgerow whips were planted. Any gaps will be filled in next winter with different types of typical native hedgerow trees which will provide more food for the wildlife such as elder, rowan, crab apple and dog rose. This hedge will create a natural barrier for the many users of the children's playground from the cold winds across the park. Maybe next year we can plant more around the other side?

Sarah Houghton

*Science and outdoor curriculum teacher*



THE CLASS OF 2024 PRESENTS

# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

PLAYING AT THE COCKPIT  
APRIL 25 & 26

[CLICK FOR TICKETS](#)



Class 12's astounding eurythmy project performance in February (you'll have to excuse the image quality and performance space and see beyond the photo to the *movement* behind it!)



## Festivals last month in Kindergarten

We started the month of February with the celebration of Candlemas, and the children enjoyed making beeswax candles and wooden candle holders. The children have been observing the small changes in nature with curiosity and they loved seeing the snowdrops flowering in our garden. A welcome reminder that Spring is coming!



We celebrated the Chinese New Year and made red paper lanterns, fans and dragons. The children helped to decorate our kindergartens for the occasion with Chinese adornments and enjoyed a feast, eating with chopsticks, and delicious sweet rice cakes.



## Congratulations, Sarah!



It's not every day you get nominated for recognition of your work, so I was rather surprised when my local councillor Bishnu Gurung approached me out of the blue when I was busy helping plant some 900 hedgerow whips around the childrens' playground on Hanworth Airpark. He asked me would it be ok if he nominated me for a community award from the Mayor of the London Borough of Hounslow. I politely said how lovely that would be and continued to dig, we had a lot to do!

This hedgerow planting project was an initiative I'd tried to get off the ground before, so I was happy this year it happened and was thrilled that so many of our students, teachers and parent and child group attendees from school

chose to join in. I have been supporting the park and community as a committee member of the Friends of Hanworth Park House (FoHPH) since lockdown and through the connections I have made with the council, our MP Seema Malhotra and other organisations such as other local Friend groups, I have been able to put lots of effort into the park. This recent hedgerow planting was done with two hats on, one as a teacher but also as a volunteer committee member for FoHPH, I have a remit for 'Education and Environment'.

In 2023 I set up the 'Hanworth AirPark Biodiversity Project', this was an initiative to study the biodiversity of the park, collect evidence to ensure it is looked after in the correct manner and enhance its biodiversity, but also to get the community involved with it. This really started in the classroom, we were doing an ecological study of the park in class 11 and did some river invertebrate monitoring work. I'd been on a training course with ZSL and thought it would be good to do this with students. My colleague Alex Harrison had also done some previous work with students on the river Crane. It had become apparent that the river Longford, that flows through the park is not well studied. So, this work would help support enhancing the biodiversity of it in the future.

We ran 2 sessions per month, 1 session was river invertebrate monitoring and the other related to the biodiversity of the park. I organised with FoHPH a BigLunch celebration at the rugby club in June and brought along the posters from class 11s work. This along with the moth trap kit helped increase community awareness of the biodiversity on the park. The mayor at the time Councillor Raghwinder Siddhu was surprised to learn there are ground nesting skylarks on the park. Seema Malhotra MP was also very interested in the work we were doing. Councillor Farah Kamran, came to join in with a summer session looking at the plants on the park and was surprised to learn about ancient acid grassland species such as pignut and knapweed. Then in July, I organised a bat walk, it was an evening when our teacher conference was on at school. We had a great turnout and this led to another bat walk around the grounds of Hanworth Park House a month later. In total we have found out there are 6 bat species living in and around HPH which need protecting.

Being involved and having a voice with the local council means that I get to gently hassle and support them in the work done on and around the park. I have been particularly active with other FoHPH committee members to organise seasonal event gatherings funded by Thriving Community grants with our host friend the 'Feltham rugby club', litter picks on the park, support new signage coming on to the park and attend stakeholder meetings. I was involved in the plans for the refurbishment of the playground which we all love. You'll be pleased to know the bucket swing on the park will soon be replenished with a larger version as it was before. I've walked out with council officers to locate new bins and benches, put up posters and we're in the process of setting up more weekly community events on the park for 2024.

So, on Tuesday I went to pick up this 'recognition of outstanding contribution within the community' which is bestowed upon a member of the public by each ward councillor in the London Borough of Hounslow each year. I took along my daughter Florence Clifford (class 10; who had helped on the biodiversity project) and we met with his worship the Mayor, Councillor Afzaal Kiani. It was a lovely afternoon and I felt honoured to be there.

The work I do on the park is to recognise and enhance its biodiversity for the environment and for the children and community as a whole who use it. The voice of plants, animals, insects, bats, children, teenagers etc is little heard and I hope to help support them and I will continue to highlight their cause in any way I can. Thank you to my students, colleagues and parents at school. This award recognition is really for you and them.

Sarah Houghton

## Class 4

Having already made their own ink and paper from foraging the grounds, it was finally time for Class 4 to make a pen for themselves from beautiful goose feathers. Its been a long wait, but fountain pens will soon see some action.

Stuart Purdy



## ***Student Council's Choice of the Month***



The student council would like to proudly proclaim our first student spotlight of the term, Sophie Mair, whose hard work and exquisite skill in art has caught our attention as deserving of recognition. Her most recent work has been a replica of a pastel work, created for an art assessment, and her diligent and masterful work with pastels has yielded a beautiful piece of art whose faithful representation of the original is truly impressive.

- The High School Student Council



# Collage resources please



In their art lessons in the High School, the students work with collage. In order to find images that inspire them, they need a lot of resources in the form of magazines, newspapers, brochures and leaflets. If you have any of these things that you would like to donate, please bring them to reception and put them in the box labelled 'Collage'.

Thank you.



These are some examples of the students' work.

# Community, notices and adverts

*[Please note that the school does not endorse or recommend, either in general or in particular, anything offered in the community pages and readers are advised to check the qualifications of practitioners or people offering services here]*



## Chess Lessons for Beginners

Quinton Daniels, an advanced chess player, age 15, is willing to teach beginner chess lessons.

£25 in-person (1 hour lesson)

£20 online (1 hour lesson)

Available after school and weekends.

Email:

QuintonChessLessons@gmail.com



## Childcare needed

Hello, I am a mum of a 3 year old lovely boy, who is currently attending kindi at the Children's garden.

I looking for a gentle person in the Steiner community available to work extra hours per week to provide childcare for my child.

We need two pick-ups (ideally Wednesday and Thursday) at Kindergarten 3:30pm to 5:30/6:00pm and Friday mornings 9:30am to 12:30pm (flexible).

We are based in Kingston :)  
francesca.pintus@gmail.com

## Become a Mentor

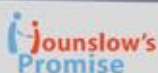
### Inspire for a Lifetime



- Work closely with a young person aged 16-24 in Hounslow
- Share your career journey and expertise
- Help your mentee to set and achieve their goals
- 1-2 hours of your time each month
- Full training provided. No previous mentoring experience needed

Sign Up Today

[www.hounslowspromise.org/mentor-sign-up](http://www.hounslowspromise.org/mentor-sign-up)



# 1st Feltham Rainbows

Come and Join us on Wednesdays at 17:30  
For Girls aged 4-7  
All Saints Church Hall, Woodlawn Drive

We encourage all girls to have fun while learning new skills and making friends!

*I promise that I will do my best  
to think about my beliefs  
and to be kind and helpful*

**The Rainbow Promise**

Firstfelthamguides@hotmail.com

Trips Games Craft  
Badges

**Girlguiding**  
1st Feltham  
Rainbows, Brownies & Guides

# 1st Feltham Brownies

Come and Join us on Wednesdays at 18:30  
For Girls aged 7-10  
All Saints Church Hall, Woodlawn Drive

We encourage all girls to have fun while learning new skills and making friends!

*Twist me and turn me and show me the bit  
I looked in the water and there saw ...*

Life skills  
Trips Games Camps  
Badges

Firstfelthamguides@hotmail.com

**Girlguiding**  
1st Feltham  
Rainbows, Brownies & Guides



Pyrites Craft Camp -  
Sun 28th July > Sat 3rd Aug 2024  
Ashen Plains - Dursley - Glos

CC Application Form: [www.pyrites.org](http://www.pyrites.org)



Prices 2024:  
Babies : Free  
Child 4yrs > 11yrs: £350  
12yrs > Adults: £450  
Prices for all meals Camping & Craft  
activities etc  
Crèche for 2>5yrs £250  
Dogs welcome - on leads allowed

A family Craft Camp where we eat & work together with evenings  
full of song & Story telling