

## Curriculum Policy

### Steiner Waldorf Education

Steiner Waldorf education is one of the largest independent school movements in the world. Rudolf Steiner 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 that if they did not do so, Steiner Waldorf education would become a method as good as, but no better than many other methods.

The richness and diversity of our curriculum, which integrates intellectual, practical, physical and artistic development, provides what any child needs to flourish, and is also indispensable for children with special educational needs (See the [SEND policy](#) for more details of how we support children with different needs). Differentiation in tasks set and in degrees of independence and support given to different children and students are normal aspects of our work and are integral to the planning of lessons in all classes.

### Curriculum planning

- The school does not recognise a fixed curriculum for Steiner Waldorf Education and actively encourages teachers to develop their own curriculum content, based on ongoing study of Child Development in the light of Anthroposophy, observation and study of the children they teach, and their own strengths and interests.
- This means that the lessons taught in each class from year to year will be different, because the children and teachers are different.
- A general picture of the curriculum that has been taught in each class is available in the *Lower School Curriculum Directory*, the *High School Course Directory*, and the *Early Years Handbook*, all on the school website (in the sidebar on each page).
- To ensure that all of the children receive the best possible education, the College of Teachers oversees and takes responsibility for all of the teaching that takes place in the school.
- The College has designated one of the school's trustees as responsible for monitoring and advising on the quality of the education offered. (See *Organisation of Staff Responsibilities* table in the staff and parents' handbooks)
- Teachers are given guidelines for lesson planning, and are expected to make certain things visible in it, but there is no requirement for all teachers to use the same format or to produce the same amount of detail.
- Some planning is done by hand and some electronically. (See Lesson planning guidelines)
- Teachers should share their lesson planning with their mentors; mentors are responsible for checking their mentees' planning regularly. (See Mentoring policy)
- Other College members should take an interest in their colleagues' work and ask to look at their planning from time to time.

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- We operate an 'open door' policy in the school so that any teacher may ask to visit any lesson. We request that all teachers welcome visits from their colleagues so that we can all take responsibility for the work that goes on in the school.
- Since planning notes are available to all staff on request, teachers must ensure that they do not contain any sensitive personal information relating to specific children, staff, parents or visitors.

### General Overview

Bearing in mind what has already been said, what follows is a general overview of what might be expected in different areas of the school and in each class.

### The Early Years

We understand that physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual development needs to be integrated in every human being. Between the ages of three and seven, the real work of children is their creative free play, through which their will forces are strengthened while, at the same time, they learn to become social beings and to integrate into a group. The Kindergarten provides an environment for this play and one in which the children can learn about the world through healthy imitation, which is the natural impulse of children at this age. Toys are of natural materials and 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 houses - so that the child can 'finish' them with his or her own imagination. There are also more structured activities during the morning such as painting, drawing, sewing, beeswax modelling, baking and simple woodwork as well as more formal, adult-led social ones like puppet shows, story telling, Eurythmy, circle games, singing and small meals prepared and eaten together.

Within all these activities, daily and weekly rhythms are maintained, providing the child with a sense of security and trust, leading to self-confidence and trust in the world. Rhythms help the child come to an understanding of time, and memories are enhanced by recurring experiences such as annual festivals in the kindergarten.

About halfway through their seventh year, the children are usually ready to enter the Lower School.

See [EY Curriculum Policy and EY Curriculum for the Older Child in Kindergarten](#) for more information

### The Lower and Middle School - The Class Teacher Period

*"If you notice in the right way, with sensitivity, what wants to develop in people at six or seven years of age, and if you have not become a teacher but are a teacher, then an awareness for this most wonderful riddle awakens through the innermost living forces...the developing person continuously offers himself to your soul's eye."*

*Rudolf Steiner*

Teachers in the school work out of an anthroposophical view of the developing human being and, through their own continuing observation of the children, try to meet their changing needs in a creative and living way, bringing them challenges as well as encouragement and joy in their work. In order to be able to work in this way, a good relationship must grow between teacher and child, between teacher and parent and between the teachers and their colleagues..

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## The Main Lesson

English, History, Geography, Sciences and Mathematics are all taught in the Main Lesson blocks, usually by the Class Teacher, and are differentiated increasingly as the children get older.

Class Teachers work with four-week blocks as far as possible, but some are three weeks. We have found that working in blocks means that each topic can be entered into deeply and thoroughly and, through continuity, the children can form a strong connection with their work.

The Main Lesson is carefully and rhythmically structured so that the children have to listen, work independently, participate and think at different times and also so that their artistic and imaginative nature is developed; Main Lessons often involve singing, music, recitation, movement, painting and stories as well as writing, drawing and oral presentation.

## Subject Lessons

Subject lessons in eurythmy, games, music, knitting, painting, modelling, form drawing, foreign languages and religion are taught from class one onwards, sometimes by the Class Teacher and sometimes by specialist teachers. Other subjects, such as crochet, sewing, clay modelling, woodwork, leatherwork, basketry, metalwork, gardening, P.E. and gym, are introduced later, each at an appropriate age to meet the developmental needs of the children. Each day's timetable is structured so that there is a healthy balance between intellectual, artistic and physical activity, as far as practical considerations allow.

Details of topics and lesson content for each class/age are in our *Lower School Curriculum Directory* and *High School Course Directory*, which are updated annually to reflect different teachers' approaches and lesson content.

## Eurythmy

Eurythmy lessons are given throughout the school. Children in the younger classes have a weekly lesson. This expands to two around Class 4 and then, from Class 9, Eurythmy is taught as a Module block of daily 2 hour lessons for 4 weeks once a year, sometimes in collaboration with sculpture and drawing.

Eurythmy is also used as a therapy. Eurythmy therapists work with individual children out of indications given by the school doctor or on the advice of Class Teachers.

## Games and P.E.

In the movement lessons the children develop social skills, spatial awareness, balance, agility, and coordination through rope-skipping, throwing and catching and age-appropriate games.

From Class 3, Bothmer Gymnastic exercises are introduced beginning with roundelays and progressing to more complicated exercise forms. Bothmer not only strengthens spatial awareness but also mirrors the inner experience of development children are going through, albeit unconsciously.

Competition is not actively discouraged, nor is it encouraged; it is found naturally in many children and is not the focus or the means of motivation in the lessons. Pre-sport games are played from around Class 5 after which some sports are introduced.

Class 5, in conjunction with their study of Ancient Greece, also train in classical athletics: long distance running, sprinting, javelin, discus, high and long jump and classical wrestling. At the end of the year they take part in the 'Greek Olympics' camp at Michael Hall School in Sussex.

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Some classes have a course of weekly swimming sessions at the local pool. From Class 6 onwards, team sports such as Hockey, Squash, Racketball, Rugby, Basketball, Netball and Ultimate are introduced. In Class 7 or 8, students can take a sailing course at the local reservoir, and in the High School, a climbing course at a local climbing centre and kayaking on the river Thames.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

From Class 1, the children learn Spanish. In the first three classes, it is taught through songs, games and little plays, so that the children are immersed in the quality of the spoken language. Grammar and the written word are introduced around Class 4. From Class 11, students choose whether or not to continue with languages. Language study aims to encourage understanding and appreciation of other cultures as well as the practical advantages of acquiring communication skills in other languages.

### **Crafts**

Handwork and crafts are central to our curriculum. They develop practical skills, problem solving, initiative, patience, perseverance and the confidence and self esteem that comes from being able to make beautiful, useful things.

Generally, we start with 'soft' handwork such as knitting in Class 1 and move on to develop understanding and skill in handling and using a range of different materials throughout the school.

Children make a variety of articles that are not merely decorative, but have a real use, such as toys, flute or handwork bags, clothing, items of furniture, musical instruments, baskets, boxes etc. They are led to an awareness of how beauty and usefulness can be combined through good design.

Part of the curriculum is also learning about where the materials come from, for example, working with wood sourced from the school grounds and with raw fleece, washing, carding, spinning and dyeing it as well as with ready-processed yarns and threads. This work connects with stories about different kinds of trees and plants in 'Home Surroundings' lessons in Classes 1 and 2; farming and building in Class 3 and 4. Pattern making for soft toys and leatherwork connects with geometry in Classes 5 to 8.

As they get older, the children are gradually introduced to new materials and related skills such as joinery, pattern cutting, dressmaking, printing, stone carving, metalwork and iron forging. Crafts in the High School are chosen according to the interest and skill level of each particular group of students and in Classes 11 and 12, the students work on independent projects.

### **Art**

Drawing and painting are an integral part of the curriculum from Kindergarten onwards. Children usually draw on a daily basis, to enhance and illustrate the topics taught, using beeswax crayons, coloured pencils, chalk pastels, charcoal, graphite and other media as they get older.

Painting is primarily an experience of colour, (as opposed to drawing, which is primarily about form and line) and so watercolour painting, using a wet-in-wet technique, begins in Kindergarten. Young children are guided in painting 'colour moods' out of little stories.

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Painting form begins around Class 3 and, again, the children are guided in this. As they get older, other media and techniques are introduced, including gouache, acrylics, watercolours and oils. Printing, Collage and mixed media are also taught and used in the High School.

The children also use modelling materials such as beeswax and clay from Kindergarten. In the Lower School, the children are generally led in a range of modelling projects, (e.g. a bird or a dog) as they learn techniques. As they get older, projects are set that can be interpreted more freely.

Where appropriate, students in the Middle School will have Art lessons with a specialist art teacher. In the High School students are taught by specialists in dedicated blocks and afternoon lessons and gradually become independent and self-directed in the work they produce.

Art/Craft is one of the compulsory core areas for formal assessment in Classes 10, 11 and 12.

### Music

Singing is an integral and daily aspect of the curriculum. Class Teachers and Music Teachers introduce the children to a range of instruments and songs. From Class 5 onwards, in addition to the weekly music lessons, the children will have choir and orchestra lessons.

In class 1, '[Mood of the Fifth](#)' music pervades the musical activities where the focus is on active listening and singing of free-flowing melodies with no strong beat and rhythm. The pentatonic lyre and flute are introduced to the children.

The class 2 children sing and play a range of pentatonic songs including the folk repertoire from various cultural traditions. The music takes on the character of strong contrasts like high and lows, loud and soft, etc which is enjoyed by the children at this age. Simple melodic improvisation begins at this stage with pentatonic music.

In class 3, the children will shift to diatonic recorders, start singing rounds to experience the harmonies in music. The music starts to become more metrical in nature and sometimes the singing is accompanied by the guitar or piano so the children can listen to how the chords support the melodies. Notation reading begins at this point.

Round singing continues in class 4 and in addition, this is the year where the class ensemble begins where children learn to play with their own instruments as a group and listen to one another in group playing.

In Class 5, the children begin to sing in 2 parts as harmonies in music begin to have an important and therapeutic role in middle school children. The music starts to have a strong beat and sometimes syncopated. The children are exposed to various musical modes in addition to the diatonic scale and participate in melodic improvisation on their instruments.

The children in class 6 begin to look at music theoretically on scales, chords, harmonic progressions and also how music is connected to other disciplines like acoustics in the study of intervals. With this theoretical grounding, the children are now able to notate the music which they have improvised.

In the Age of Exploration theme of class 7, the children begin to look at music and instruments from other cultures. This becomes more meaningful after they are exposed to music theory in class 6 where they can compare and contrast between Western music and other forms of musical expressions.

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In class 8, the children will explore different musical styles and characterise them according to their melodic, harmonic and rhythmic elements. Active listening alternates with active music-making where the children work more on composition projects to bring the music from inside of them to the outside. Music theory studies continue and are seen as a tool for composition.

In high school, music continues to play a vital role in the curriculum with weekly choir and ensemble lessons with its importance to bring levity to the pupils and also the social connection between them. Individual and group project work allows opportunities for pupils to bring out their inner music. Over the 4 years in high school, the pupils will look at music from each of the musical epoch from Baroque to Classical to Romantic and finally to 20th-century modern music in Class 12. Music specialisation is also possible with the music teacher with the building of a portfolio as well as performances of a chosen repertoire.

### PSHEE

From Class 1, students have a programme of weekly lessons throughout the year (called 'Religion' in the Lower School and 'Global Issues' in the Middle and High School) in which such things as relationships, courage, kindness, respect and consideration for others, understanding of other cultures and faiths etc. are brought in stories at first, developing into discussions as the children get older.

Human values are promoted throughout the school through stories (in the Kindergarten and younger classes) and through dedicated Religion and Global Issues lessons as the children get older. From Age 5, teachers initiate regular conversations with children about their use of electronic media; 'Religion' and 'Global Issues' lessons also regularly include discussion of topics like electronic media, the internet and e-safety, privacy and bullying via social media etc. Details of when and how this takes place is in individual teachers' lesson planning. For more detailed information about how these issues are approached and taught, see these policies on the [website](#):

- *Use of Electronic Media Policy*
- *E-Safety Curriculum Policy,*
- *Human Values statement*
- *Equality and Diversity Policy*
- *Relationships and Sex Education Policy*
- *Anti-bullying Policy*

### The High School

The High School programme is designed to give the students a foundation in a broad range of subjects, to develop practical and study skills and to encourage initiative and independence in learning. In Classes 10, 11 and 12, we offer assessment and certification through the new Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education (NZCSE or CSE) at levels 1, 2 and 3. The CSE is externally moderated and, at Level 3, with University Entrance Levels in Maths and English, gives students access to university.

In Classes 9 and 10, there is a course of compulsory Main Lessons for all students throughout the year. Modules in a variety of arts and crafts form part of this programme, which is supported by regular weekly lessons in Global Issues, P.E., Choir, Band/Orchestra and Bothmer Gymnastics. In order to keep the curriculum broad at this stage, the certificate requires that students pass at least one assessment in each of six core areas: Maths, English, Social Studies, Natural Sciences, Arts and Movement.

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Midway through Class 10, students are consulted and advised about their hopes and plans for the future. We refer to what they tell us, as well as our own knowledge and experience, in our planning for Classes 11 and 12. There is an increasing number of optional Main Lessons and elective arts, crafts, supplementary and independent study lessons in these years, so that students can give more time to their areas of particular interest. Some compulsory Main Lessons continue, and students must choose at least one subject from each of the core CSE subject areas at each level.

In Class 9 there is the possibility of student exchanges for those interested in improving their language skills. We also offer students from other countries the opportunity to visit and study with us.

In Class 11, students are encouraged to take up a work experience placement and/or employment outside school.

In Class 12, part of the programme is devoted to a major personal project.

The programme for each year depends on demand, space, individual students' needs, curriculum development, facilities and availability of staff.

See the *High School Course Directory* (in the sidebar on each page of the website) for a list of all courses offered in this academic year.

### **The St Michael Steiner School Curriculum Guidance**

The table below shows an outline of the subjects recommended<sup>1</sup> and approximate time given to each subject in each class. Teachers may interpret them freely to suit the particular needs of a class, provided the curriculum used is age appropriate and hygienic.

Especially in the older classes, there will be some overlap in Main Lesson blocks. e.g. Nature study and Geography, Chemistry and Geography, History and English. In the younger classes, these subjects are, anyway, not differentiated.

The specific content of each block and lesson is decided by the relevant teacher and is contained in their lesson plans and overall aims for their lessons. Teachers should be aware of the curriculum indications given by Rudolf Steiner, on which this guidance is based.

Main Lessons are taught by the Class Teacher in the Lower and Middle School (Classes 1 - 8) In the older classes, sometimes even from Class 6 onwards, but especially in the High School, Main Lesson blocks are taught by specialist teachers.

Lower and Middle School Main Lessons are 2 hours per day, 5 days a week and last 3-4 weeks

Subject lessons are 30, 60 or 90 minutes long

High School morning Main Lessons are 2 hours long, 5 days a week and last 3-4 weeks

High School afternoon Lessons are 1 hour or 1¾ hours long and run throughout the year

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendations from *Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for the Waldorf School*, and from current practice in our school

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Class	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Main Lessons</b> (+ no. of Blocks)	English - 3 - 4 Maths - 3 - 4 Home Surroundings - 3-4	English - 3 - 4 Maths - 3 - 4 Home Surroundings - 3-4	English - 3 Maths - 3 Farming - 2-3 Old Testament - 2-3 (Building - 2)	English - 3 Maths - 3 Mythology - 2-3 Geography - 1 Nature study (animals) - 1-2 (Building - 2)	English - 3 Maths - 3 Mythology - 2-3 Geography - 1 Nature study (Plants) - 1 - 2	English - 2-3 Maths - 3 History - 2-3 Geography - 1-2 Nature study (plants and animals)- 1-2 Physics - 1
<b>Weekly Lessons</b> (as considered appropriate in each class)	German, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	German, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	German, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	German, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	German, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion, Form Drawing.	English, Maths, German, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion.
Class	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Compulsory Main Lessons</b> (+ no. of Blocks)	English - 2-3 Maths - 2-3 History - 2-3 Geography - 1 Nature study (human physiology) - 1 Physics - 1 Chemistry - 1 Astronomy - 1	English - 2-3 Maths - 2-3 History - 2-3 Geography - 1 Nature study (Human anatomy) - 1 Physics - 1 Chemistry - 1 Astronomy - 1	English - 2 Maths - 2 History - 2 Geography - 1 Biology - 1 Physics - 1 Chemistry -1 IT/Research - 1 Building - 1-2 Languages - 1-2	English - 2 Maths - 2 History - 2 Geography - 1 Biology - 1 Physics - 1 Chemistry -1 IT/Research - 1 Languages - 1-2	English Projective Geometry Embryology Medieval History - 1	Modern Literature Evolutionary Biology Personal Project
<b>Compulsory Arts Blocks</b> (+ no. of Blocks)			Eurythmy, Dance, Music, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Sculpture, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama, Dressmaking and other crafts.	Eurythmy, Dance, Music, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Sculpture, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama, Dressmaking and other crafts.		



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<b>Elective Main Lessons</b>					Calculus Romantic Poetry Creative Writing Chemistry Physics Mechanics Medieval History - 1 Botany Astronomy Geography	Calculus & Maths Binomial Theorem & Complex Number Theory Organic Chemistry Physics Biology Astronomy/ Cosmology Russian Literature Film Studies Modern Drama Creative Writing Modern History Philosophy Economics Geography
<b>Elective Art/ Craft Blocks</b> (variously offered as needed/wanted)					Eurythmy, Dance, Music, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Sculpture, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama, Dressmaking and other crafts.	Eurythmy, Dance, Music, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Sculpture, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama, Dressmaking and other crafts.
<b>Weekly Lessons</b> (as considered appropriate in each class)	English, Maths, German, Spanish, Music, Eurythmy, Painting, Games, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Religion.	English, Maths, German, Spanish, Music, P.E., Religion, Eurythmy, Painting, Modelling, Drawing, Handwork, Woodwork, Basketry, Pottery, Drama.	Choir Band Bothmer P.E. Global Issues	Choir Band Bothmer P.E. Global Issues	Choir Band Bothmer P.E. Global Issues	Choir Band Bothmer P.E. Global Issues

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