

The St Michael Steiner School

The Health and Development Advisors and the School Doctor

The Health and Development Advisors

The school has an anthroposophical Health and Development Advisor, Jenny Josephson, who is a retired GP and Anthroposophical physician. Although she is retired, we have been working with her for thirty years and very much value the insights she is able to give after so many years as our school doctor. She usually visits the school twice a year.

Since 2002, Jenny has been accompanied on some of her visits by Dr. Francisco Barcello, who works in Finland with children with developmental issues and behavioural and learning difficulties. Francisco offers additional educational insights and can suggest ways in which teachers can support the children. Dr. Barcello does not normally meet with parents.

Both Jenny and Francisco advise teachers out of a deep understanding of the human being and child development from an anthroposophical point of view. They do not prescribe medicines, but may suggest pedagogical exercises, remedies and therapies such as eurythmy, Bothmer movement or art therapy which can help with many different issues.

Procedure

The Health and Development Advisors see children who are put forward by their Class Teachers. The teacher completes a form outlining the child's circumstances and background, for example, position in the family, whether both parents are present, any significant illnesses, conditions, events or accidents, as well as the reason for being seen by the advisors, which can be educational, behavioural or a concern for the child's general wellbeing.

These forms are sent to the advisors in advance of the visit. A copy is kept in the child's confidential file.

Children are accompanied by a member of staff when they see the Health and Development Advisors.

The advisors ask the children questions, for example about their sleep habits, what food they like, and give them tasks, based on the information they have been given. They examine them, for example, feel their hands and feet for temperature, listen to their heart and breathing and to their speech, watch their movement and gestures, look for left or right dominance.

The advisors then report verbally to the teachers. Sometimes they may also ask to speak to parents, and this can be done in person, or later by phone.

Consent

Consent for children to see the health and development advisors is given on the general consent form which parents sign when they join the school. Occasionally parents may withhold consent; Class Teachers should be aware of this and discuss it with them to reassure them and make them aware of how helpful the advisors' input is for us and for the children. Ultimately, however, we have to accept the parents' decision.

Procedure for teachers

Class Teachers who would like their children to see the health and development advisor should submit a request to the College via the relevant staff meeting, and the College will mandate someone to draw up a list.

The list must be finalised at least 2 weeks before the visit to give teachers time to write reports and for them to be delivered.

Parents of the pupils to be seen should be notified in writing and consent sought at least a week before the visit. It is the Class Teacher's responsibility to ensure that this is done in each case, but the receptionist may actually do it, using a standard letter.

Parents also need to be told whether or not they will be expected or able to meet with the advisor themselves.

The College will mandate someone to organise a space and to liaise with teachers to arrange the order in which children will be seen.

The School Doctor

The school also has a school doctor, Dr. Hedda Joyce, who is a GP and Anthroposophical physician. She visits the school to advise on Class 1 readiness.

Class 1 Readiness

In April or May, all children in the Kindergarten who turn six during the current academic year are assessed for readiness to go into Class 1 in the following September.

The Kindergarten teachers and the children's parents complete forms as described above and give these to the doctor on the day of the visit.

The children are seen in small groups to enable the doctor to assess their social skills and watch interactions, and are accompanied by one of the Kindergarten teachers.

Like the Health and Development Advisors, Dr Joyce gives the children tasks, such as drawing forms and pictures, finger games, speech, writing their name etc. and observes their movement, right/left orientation etc.

She then reports verbally to the teachers and provides a short written report to the teachers and each child's parents. Sometimes she will ask to speak to a child's parents and this usually happens later, by phone.

The doctor's advice about whether a child will move into Class 1 is taken into account, but the final decision is taken by the teachers, in consultation with the child's parents.

Next review: July 2026