Welcome to our Summer 2018 Newsletter.

Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley Update

Over the last two years we have undergone significant change as a school, which has involved the restructuring of our management team including the appointment of an interim Principal for the first time in our 69 year history. The trustees have this week announced the appointment of Mr Martin Blain as permanent Principal from August 2018. These changes in management structure have added clarity and streamlined the decision making process necessary in today’s ever-changing regulatory environment, but have not affected our ability to deliver an authentic Steiner Waldorf education.

In July of 2017, we received notice from the DfE of their intent to remove the school from the register of independent schools. This notice was a follow up to a relevant restriction placed on the school in March 2017 that disallowed us from admitting new pupils. Both the restriction and the de-registration were the result of not meeting the safeguarding standard for independent schools in an Ofsted inspection in December 2016. The safeguarding standard was met in an inspection in November 2017, but was unfortunately lost in a monitoring inspection in February 2018 due to an administrative oversight. We are very confident that we will be fully compliant with the safeguarding standard in the next inspection.

Both the restriction and the de-registration are currently under appeal which allows us to admit new pupils and operate as usual.

We will defend our appeal in a tribunal set for July 2018. It is foreseen that the tribunal will be preceded by an Ofsted monitoring inspection sometime before the end of summer term. We feel that we are in a good position to win our case in the tribunal. In a meeting of all parents held on the 18th of April the atmosphere was very positive and there is a tremendous amount of support for the school.

Parental support along with seeing the happy and thriving children here every day makes us even more determined to do everything we can to ensure the school’s future.

The lengthy appeal process has put the school under financial pressure, too, of course due to legal fees and decreased enrolment. However, we do have financial options and we will be able to meet all of the school’s obligations without the curriculum and teaching being compromised. When we have cleared the legal hurdles we are very confident of rebuilding pupil numbers.

We have, of course learned a great deal from this entire process, and we will be looking at creating opportunities to share what we have learned in the near future.

I hope this brief overview of our current situation serves to answer questions that may have arisen about the situation here in Kings Langley. As stated above, we are confident of overcoming the current obstacles and are looking forward to a bright future for Rudolf Steiner School Kings Langley.

Tim Byford, Interim Principal

Congratulations to Ringwood Waldorf School and their students who have gained University places since graduating, on the basis of the RWS Upper School Diploma alone. It was a leap of faith to take no other examinations, but their hard work, Diploma Report and insightful interview manner has earned them places at Higher Education Institutions including:

Bournemouth University - reading Archaeology; The Academy of Contemporary Music - reading Music; and most recently, following a break, The University of York - reading Politics, Economics and Philosophy. Ringwood Waldorf School Upper School students have also gained places, at Bangor - reading History and Archaeology, and Oxford University reading English.

This is a welcome and promising start, and a testament to the excellent standard of teaching. It speaks of the great things yet to come. Younger classes are eagerly
anticipating their chance to shine in the fledgling Upper School at Ringwood. Word is also getting out about the warm welcome to be found there and many students from overseas are booking their opportunity to study at Ringwood. This brings a positive international flavour to Upper School and, indeed, the whole school.

Elaine Holt

Closest finish to Cambridge Schools Chess Challenge ever:

Cambridge Steiner School, based in Fulbourn, has been awarded the prestigious trophy for the 2017-2018 Cambridgeshire Chess Championship for Schools coming top out of 30 teams from across Cambridgeshire.

This year’s Steiner School team won an exciting last minute victory, taking first place with a half point lead making this the closest finish to the season ever. The result came down to the very last game; the Steiner School winning with a total of 48 points, runners up St Faith’s gaining 47.5 points and the Girl’s Chess Initiative A team coming in third place with 45.5 points.

Mark Conlin, the school’s chess club leader said: “It was a really exciting tournament and all the teams played exceptionally well. Chess is a great game for children as it improves concentration and strengthens problem solving skills. Research also shows that chess improves children’s literacy and numeracy and in addition the children develop good social and behavioural attributes. However, the main thing is the children love playing chess and the competition gives them the opportunity to play and develop their game”.

The school joined the Cambridgeshire Chess Championship in 2014. Since then the school chess club has become very popular with children playing one another, their teachers and visiting players, including a 90 year old grandfather. Several of the school players have even gone on to compete at county and national level.

Following its latest tournament win, the school would like to host a multicultural and multigenerational chess tournament with 100 players in 2019, in celebration of 100 years of Steiner Waldorf education.

Shivum Gordon-Shah and Jamie Magrath, both 11, who have both been at the school since they were 2 years old, played in the tournament, and said ‘it was a great experience and we liked getting to play so much chess and having so many good players to play against.’

Rebecca Mitchell

Plymouth CIC has been set up as a new community venture in Plymouth, providing an alternative option to mainstream education and lifestyle choices. We will be home to a variety of projects but in the main we will be a Steiner Waldorf Children’s Centre. We are hoping to provide Parent and Baby and Parent and Child sessions as well as start up a kindergarten for ages 4-7. Who knows, in the future maybe this could lead to a Plymouth Steiner School? We certainly hope so.

We are in desperate need of help to get up and running. Shortly we will be starting our Crowd funder to raise the initial money needed to pay for planning permission (for change of use), lease paperwork, insurance, refurbishment etc., but we also need help with finding equipment and resources. If you have anything lying around that your schools no longer use, please keep us in mind. Indoor equipment (wooden crates, planks, dolls, craft materials, role play, dressing up materials, blankets, rugs, wooden, metal cutlery, crockery, ‘home corner’ items, gnomes, wooden, knitted animals etc), outdoor equipment (rakes, metal sand moulds, buckets, spades, wheelbarrows, galvanised steel baths, trailers, seeds, plants, tools, rope etc) books for our parent - teacher library, anything really that would help bring a Steiner Waldorf atmosphere to Plymouth!

You can keep updated with our progress (or get in touch to offer support) on our Facebook page: Snapdragons Plymouth, or by emailing snapdragonsplymouth@gmail.com

Thank you so much,

Laura Roberts, Gia Daprano and Shelly Little.

Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship is sponsoring this initiative, it is the only school in Cyprus and is English speaking. We are opening our conferences to their staff and will offer help and support if needed.

See website here

If you are in Cyprus, do visit them!
Forthcoming SWSF conferences:

- May 26th **Association conference** with Florian Osswald - Wynstones
- June 9th **Safeguarding conference** with Jane Cooper – Elmfield
- June 9th **Language teachers** workshop with Anthea Chapman – London Steiner School
- 22-24th July **Preparing for class 1** with David Smith and others – Alder Bridge
- 22 September **Early Years Inspection and Regulation** – Kings Langley
- 24th November **Hand Gesture Games** - Kings Langley
- 2019 **Easter conference** - Hosted by Michael Hall

see details of conferences here

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School has received its latest SIS report. The inspectors concluded that Elmfield ‘provides a good education for its pupils’ and that ‘Pupils of all abilities make good progress in their learning across the school.’ The key outcomes are:

- The quality of education - Good
- Pupils’ personal development - Outstanding
- Safeguarding pupils’ welfare, health and safety - Good
- Leadership, management and governance - Good
- Effectiveness of the Early Years’ provision - Good

The school is delighted that the pupils’ personal development was recognised as being outstanding as this is one of the great strengths of a Steiner education. The inspectors declared that “By the time they leave the school pupils are confident, thoughtful, articulate, polite and compassionate young people who are good learners with strong ethical values and a good understanding of British society and its institutions. Behaviour is excellent.”

These results reflect the continuing hard work and dedication of everyone involved with Elmfield. The full report can be found on Elmfield’s website (http://elmfield.com/the-school/key-info/sis-report/).

Chris Field

‘Pupils flourish’ at the Steiner Academy Hereford says Ofsted

Hereford Steiner Academy has retained its ‘good’ Ofsted judgement. Following a recent inspection (the first since the Steiner Academy was judged to be ‘good’ by Ofsted in July 2013); inspectors have confirmed that the school ‘continues to be good’.

Ofsted’s report is particularly positive about many aspects of the school, such as it being ‘deeply committed to the Steiner principles that underpin (its) work’ and, as a result, stating it has ‘an ethos that strongly promotes pupils’ personal development’. The report goes on to say that:

Sam Greshoff
‘... pupils experience a broad, rich, interesting curriculum that emphasises the development of their physical and emotional well-being. The way the school is organised provides a close-knit, family-like community. This means that staff know each individual pupil very well. Pupils flourish in this environment. They are confident, self-assured and self-motivated learners, hungry to explore and broaden their knowledge. Pupils enjoy the school. They say that they have no concerns about being bullied. They feel safe, cared for and well supported.’

‘From the point at which they begin formal schooling at around age seven, pupils make increasingly rapid progress and achieve well by the time they leave the school. The strong results achieved in GCSE examinations in recent years are likely to be sustained.’

Principal Stephen Holland commented:
‘Contrary to current educational thinking, what we see in our school is that allowing a full experience of childhood, having a later start to formal learning and an age-appropriate curriculum rich in music, art, performance and the outdoors, in no way inhibits children’s academic development. In fact, our evidence suggests quite the opposite, that having a more creative approach to all learning prepares our young people to do very well academically, and actively fosters their healthy development as human beings.’

The Steiner Academy Hereford was initially founded as a Steiner Waldorf kindergarten in 1983 by a group of parents who aspired to provide their children with holistic education focused on the age-appropriate learning advocated by Rudolf Steiner. In 2008, the school became the first Steiner Waldorf School in the UK to become a state-funded academy. Over the 35 years since the school opened its doors, it has welcomed around 1500 children. After leaving at the age of 16, pupils progress to local sixth form, technical and arts colleges. Many go on to higher education, including renowned universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, UCL and Edinburgh, and subsequently pursue a wide range of careers.

The inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website here.

Adventures on the high sea!

Class 7 Pupils from Elmfield and Cambridge have recently spent three days and nights at sea on a traditional tall ship, The Lord Nelson. They went with the Jubilee Sailing Trust, a charity that provides sailing experiences on tall ships for disabled and able-bodied crews. This was an amazing experience for the two classes, sailing from Southampton to Portsmouth, via the Needles out into the open sea and back along the Solent.

When they arrived on board they were put into “watches” of about 8 pupils, responsible for 2-hour long day and night watches, and also mess duty. Watches included looking out for other ships and objects, helming, and taking meteorological readings. Getting up for a 4am watch was a real challenge, but worth the effort.

Mess duty meant getting up at 6.30 am, having breakfast then preparing breakfast for everyone else, laying the table, waking the others, serving food and clearing up, then washing down the tables and washing up. Added to this was “Happy hour” when everyone would take turns cleaning the decks, toilets, and rails etc. All this hard work kept them busy and taught them a lot about teamwork and responsibility, perfect for their age group.

Aside from watch duties everyone took turns setting (raising) the sails and bracing the yardarm, all by hand. The Coarse (big sails) weighed over a ton and setting the sails was required every time the ship changed direction. One of the most challenging and exciting parts of the trip was climbing the rigging to the high platforms, something they all found both daunting and rewarding. Evenings involved various activities such as navigation lessons and tying knots, but also fun activities such as seeing which team could build the biggest spaghetti and marshmallow tower.

The crew were very impressed by all the pupils and often commented on this. They particularly loved the sea shanties the pupils brought with them and sang.

The last day was spent visiting the research centre where Britain’s entry into the next America’s Cup is being prepared. Then it was trains home for a very
well-deserved rest. For the ship though there was a return journey to make, this time crewed by pupils from York Steiner school.

All in all, it was an incredible trip and one that they will never forget.

Chris Field

News from the ACTS Project: The ACTS Multiplier event in Oslo last month was a big hit with Norwegian High School Teachers. The Conference was held to promote the forthcoming ACTS book, and featured keynote talks from the renowned neuroscientist, inventor, and previous Steiner School scholar, Baldur Onarheim. There was also the welcome opportunity to hear from an innovative and inspiring Norwegian learning support specialist and Henrikke Moerk for the Norwegian Association of Steiner schools. Crossfields Institute gave an overview of the ACTS suite of qualifications currently being trialled.

This event drew a significant group of interested Upper school teachers who enjoyed the hilariously effective inverted brainstorming session. All expressed delight regarding the trans-discipline, mind-mapping exercise vowing to take this approach back to their schools. The mind-mapping exercise has been developed by our colleagues in Finland and integrated into their practical planning to great effect. The working together and economy of teaching it offered was particularly appreciated.

We now look forward to a fruitful 2018-2019 with the launch of the suite of qualifications and the book. There will be one further event in the UK later this summer where interested teachers and friends can come to hear the latest exciting developments. The ACTS project has also been invited by Professor Mark Runco, to present the Spectrum of Creative Thinking Skills to the international Creativity Conference in Oregon USA. This is a wonderful opportunity to present our work, and the outstanding example that is Steiner Education, alongside notable keynote speakers including Csikszentmihalyi, Sternberg and Runco. The conference is set to co-ordinate with the American Psychologists Association and includes an international group of presenters. Elaine Holt will be making the presentation. We will report further on this in the Autumn. See ACTS website here

Elaine Holt

National Children’s Day UK celebrations at the St Michael Steiner School, west London

Around forty children and their parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts came to enjoy a free outdoor playtime in our beautiful school gardens on National Children’s Day UK, Sunday 13th May. Children made bees and butterflies with pine cones and wool, ate popcorn cooked in a big cauldron over an open fire, danced around the maypole, and lastly watched a puppet show of The Three Billy Goats Gruff. We were even blessed with the sun coming out! As one kindergarten parent observed - such a great opportunity for new families as well as many current Parent & Child group attendees to meet the kindergarten staff and play in their leafy garden.

Photo credit: Maria Costa

The summer meeting of the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education took place this May in Prague under blue skies and sometimes sultry heat. One of the most valuable things about such meetings, both for the hosting Association and school, as for ECSWE members, is meeting with work done by Steiner Waldorf teachers in their own settings. Although what is now the Czech Republic has all the hallmarks of modern European economies and Prague especially has become a magnet for stag parties, hen parties, wedding parties, or just partying, that reality hides a more complex, and sometimes darker, interior. Prague was, after all the city of Jan Hus, Comenius, and, later, Franz Kafka, Jaroslav Hasek and many more, a city that ranks among the greatest European cultural centres and which also witnessed the brutal suppression of “the Prague Spring” or “Velvet Revolution” when Soviet tanks rolled in to crush the first stirrings of democratic reform.

Our meeting took place at the Waldorfska Lyceum in the outskirts of the city, surrounded by blocks of flats in
Opatov, a dormitory suburb of Prague. Restricted premises mean that this State-funded school remains relatively small; with 120 secondary pupils aged 16 and over (classes 10-13). The intake consists of half pupils from Waldorf schools and half from others. Paintings, pupil presentations and craft work are of high quality and, strikingly, the Waldorf Lyceum is listed as one of the seven top Czech schools (based on results in the Matura, the Czech School Leaving Certificate). The specific Czech character could be felt at a superb concert given by students from this school and a smaller one, from Ostrava in the east of the country. In the finale the choirs combined for a deeply Slavic rendering of the St Vitus Chorale in a setting by Anton Dvorak. The bearing and enthusiasm of the students was a joy to see.

In addition, the Council also worked on (along with business matters):

- Assessment - the different international needs and requirements as well as the Waldorf fundamentals
- IT curriculum - something that educators in every country have to reckon with, finding the best path for the child between knowledge and precaution
- Lobbying (including a much-praised workshop given by ECSWE administrator, Georg Jürgens)
- Waldorf 100 - plans for 2019 conference and
- Detailed study if the growth and challenges of the Czech Waldorf movement
- Other developments in member countries
- Reports from partner organisations (Freunde, the European Parents’ Association, ENSWAP, and the ELIANT petition)

Kevin Avison

The IASWECE Council meeting took place in Prague this May. The burning issue for this meeting was that of the impact of Digital Technology on the young child and their families. We discussed how we can strengthen the core capacities in our education that we need to help the children develop in order to cope with the impact of digital technology in our lives. We also attended a public conference which included Czech as well as our colleagues from the Waldorf schools International Forum (IF). Clara Aerts was the speaker for early childhood, and she will be coming to the UK for our early childhood conference on the 9th February 2019. The working group on Digital Media is looking at how to integrate the topic of digital media into kindergarten and teacher training.

During our time together with the IF, we discussed how the schools and early childhood movement can work closer together. We shared with them the draft manifesto on the 6-7 year old transition to school from kindergarten. We will also be working closely on teacher training issues. We welcomed Vietnam as a member.

Planning is underway for the International Early Childhood Conference which will take place in Dornach April 2019. Information on this will be sent out in October.

We are also organising the International Early Childhood Teacher Trainers conference which will take place in Ireland after our next council meeting.

Janni Nicol

PLEASE HELP the Rudolf Steiner School Mbagathi
This growing school near Nairobi, Kenya seeks to create a healthy, lively learning environment for needy children.

We are seeking sponsorship of small, regular amounts.

For more information:
www.steinerschoolmbagathi.co.ke