

# Some thoughts on public funding for Steiner education.

Steiner education in this country is over 80 years old and it is impressive that we have the number of schools and early-years centres that we do. It has taken much courage and sacrifice to exist in the hitherto less than conducive environment of the UK education system. Some form of public funding that would still allow us the freedom to meet the child's needs which we require has been a goal through all these decades. However times change and we now find our educational principles more in accord with what is being said by an increasing number of mainstream educators and innovative circles of politicians, academics and practitioners. An example would be Guy Claxton's "five I's" as ways of learning: immersion, imitation, imagination, intuition and intellect. To which I suggest we would add a sixth: inspiration. Despite varied interpretation, the realisation of "spirituality", as a concept worthy of serious study in the context of education and childhood, is a sign of a deeper change and a more questioning attitude to the educational traditions inherited from the past. Contemporary issues concerning multi-culturalism, multiple intelligences, competencies, creativity, responsibility and tolerance have created a forum in which Waldorf is steadily becoming a respected and a progressively influential participant. Now we too have to think of the future.

Our schools have survived and served the vast majority of their pupils well. But is the endless struggle to survive in fact compatible with what Waldorf education could venture to become? There is weariness in some quarters of the movement and teacher burn-out is not an unknown phenomenon in our schools. As parental interest grows we are clearly not attracting enough younger colleagues who can take the impulse forward with integrity, enthusiasm and commitment to the underlying Anthroposophy. In these times our responsibility goes beyond the traditional boundaries of our existing institutions. We are becoming more and more conscious of our responsibilities to all children and their educational wellbeing. As part of a world-wide movement that Steiner clearly intended to bring about social change, we need to widen our horizons and, through that interest in the world, find new sources of strength and inspiration.

In our international work and collaboration we have noted that countries like Norway, and, more recently, New Zealand, Sweden and Finland have managed to integrate well into national educational life. Public funding has enabled the schools there to flourish thereby allowing Waldorf ideas and methods to percolate into mainstream practice. This process has and does require constant vigilance and debate but nevertheless they have successfully developed in a way we would seek to emulate. Public funding brings new questions and challenges, as well as risks, yet also allows a greater facility for inclusion that lay at the heart of initial educational impulse. The countries that have surmounted these challenges well have not forfeited any sense of being Steiner schools nor the essential principles on which the education is based. Why cannot it also happen here? The set of provisions so far put in place by the DfES and SWSF together with the expertise and enthusiasm of the Hereford school community can give grounds for optimism and can encourage us to explore this further. If we do not, we could well end up regretting this long sought for opportunity as a failure of courage and imagination which could result in our work remaining peripheral to the educational environment in general.

What we are currently being offered is, in fact, an opportunity which could, if taken up with foresight and awareness, become a help in surmounting some of our own present inadequacies and dilemmas. We must move on with the knowledge that the spiritual world has laid these questions before us at this time and this place, and endeavour to live up to the task of being engaged with like minded people of good will in trying to lift educational practice to a level that all children deserve. What happens here is of educational interest to much of the world and influences policy beyond our shores. Our colleagues abroad have made this abundantly clear over the years we have worked together in ECSWE and other international groups and we can also be confident of their support and encouragement.

*Christopher Clouder. SWSF*

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## News in Brief .

### **Imhoff 's Waldorf School**

In the last edition of this newsletter we reported on the fire at Imhoff's School in South Africa. Readers kindly sent in a total of £740 which was gratefully received by the school when it was handed over at a recent teachers' conference in Cape Town. They stated that they were getting onto their feet again and were heartened by such a spontaneous response.

### **SWSF Workshops**

This year we have offered more in-service training workshops and have covered classes 2, 6, 7, science teachers, language teachers, upper school and administrators. Still to come this term are workshops for next year's Class 3 teachers to be held in Bristol on July 1-2nd and next year's Class 1's to be held in Hereford August 19-20th. For information email [j.avison@yescomputers.co.uk](mailto:j.avison@yescomputers.co.uk) Next year we hope to arrange single workshops for all classes 1-8. and the dates will be on our website.

### **Number of schools**

We are frequently asked about the number of school in the world. In March this year there were 894 schools in 45 countries. There are also young schools and initiatives in other countries, including China, Lebanon and Tanzania, that are not listed as yet.

### **Israel.**

Since September 2004 there has been an Arabic speaking Kindergarten in the Palestinian town of Shfaram, near Mount Carmel, which has a mixed population of Moslems, Christians and Druze. It is a joint endeavour of Arab and Jewish educators in Western Galilee and the first step in making Waldorf education available to the Arab community. At the moment there are 24 children aged between 2 and 4 and it is seen as an important peace initiative to bridge the cultural and historical divisions.

## Government Approval for the Next Step

Good news... At last, we now have approval to go to the feasibility stage of a first publicly-funded Steiner school based at the Hereford Waldorf School.

This news came through just before the general election was declared - and I mean just! We had been anticipating an earlier decision from the Minister, but things were delayed by the volume of interest that this controversial proposal attracted as it wended its way through the various tiers of the Department for Education and Skills. In fact I was beginning to think we would never get there! In the end, it took a bit of a push to help ever-cautious civil servants to take the leap into the unknown. It was such a sense of relief - and achievement - when the Minister's approval came through at the beginning of April, however that moment was short-lived. Out of the blue a new obstacle presented itself: suddenly it looked like we weren't going to be able to buy the field next to the school on which to build the new school after all, despite agreeing the purchase months previously, raising the money, and getting the outline planning consent. No site, no project. Nevertheless, after another three nail-biting weeks, things moved again and the exchange of contracts finally happened. On Friday 22nd April there was a 'gate-opening' ceremony, a flower-ribbon was cut and the school community spilt out onto the wide-open space that the school had longingly looked upon for so long. The local MP and two DfES representatives were there for the event and were equally moved by poignancy of the occasion and by the sense of expectation as the children took 'ownership' of the field.

Of course getting approval and funding for feasibility is only a first step and there is still a lot of work to be done. There are some hearts and minds still to be won; but there are also many within the DfES and within the school movement who are very excited by this step and see it as a significant break-through. There is certainly a sense of anticipation. Among the many messages received as the news spread, perhaps I may include the one from the previous Secretary of State for Education, Estelle Morris: "I am absolutely delighted. Congratulations! Gosh, hasn't it taken a long time! You must be excited at the potential there is now. I really hope that as well as offering financial stability to your school in Hereford, we make sure all schools learn from the best you do. My best wishes to the staff and students at Much Dewchurch. Estelle".

I hope the whole school movement can join with her in wishing this project well. I am personally delighted and remain optimistic that this is the beginning of a new future where Steiner education can find its rightful place in the educational landscape of this country.

*Sylvie Sklan. SWSF*



*Gateway to the future*

## From Professor Daniel T Jones

As a former Steiner School pupil, whose father was a Steiner teacher and whose three children went right through the Hereford Waldorf School, I very much welcome the Government's decision to establish the first Steiner Academy in Hereford. As someone who was a member of three government Task Forces reporting to the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister I recognise how significant a step this really is.

This initiative would not have happened without strong support right from the very top and this in turn would not have happened without some very effective lobbying input on behalf of the Steiner schools movement.

The most important gift I and my children received from a Steiner education is an abiding and lifelong interest in the world and how we can work together with our fellow human beings to improve it. This is precisely the example the government is looking to the

Steiner education movement to contribute to schools across the country. Of course this is a big opportunity for the Hereford Academy to develop and grow beyond the resources available from its existing parent base. More significantly it is a major opportunity for the Steiner movement to make a big difference in the wider world by helping teachers everywhere to unlock this interest in learning about and caring for our world. I sincerely hope we can raise our sights and have the courage and confidence to respond to this unique opportunity.



*HWS expands its sights*

# International Waldorf Kindergarten Conference Dornach, Goetheanum - 27th April 2005

The conference was attended by over 1100 Kindergarten teachers from all around the world, and over 40 from the UK.

The theme of the conference was "Playing, Learning, Encountering" and reflects the concern amongst the International Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten Movement that children's play is being threatened by the trend to begin formal education increasingly early, with emphasis on academic learning.

These quotes from Rudolph Steiner set the context for the conference;

*"...thus providing free space for the formation of human nature. This is play. That is also the way we can best occupy a child. We should not give children concepts with fixed boundaries, but rather ideas that allow thinking the free space to explore and even to err here and there. Only in this way will we discover the course of thinking that arises from an inner predisposition..."*  
*The Education of the Child. 1911.*

*"...The first step in this direction is to learn to understand the particular ways in which the child wants to be freely active in play. All the various types of stereotyped, thought up games with their inhibiting rules are alien to the young child's nature, for they suppress what should be freely mobile within the child. Through such organised games the child's own inner activity is gradually being dulled down and the child feels itself within the outer activity without any inner interest..."*  
*Soul Economy and Waldorf Education, 1922.*

The lecturers, Joan Almon; Michaela Glockler; Peter Selg; Christof Wiechert and Heinz Zimmermann, addressed the conference theme, supported by 68 workshops on everything from 'Free Play and Child Learning', to 'Developing True Human Meetings with Parents.'

There was music, singing, eurythmy, theatre, puppet shows, sharing of initiatives from Korea to Ukraine, dancing in the courtyard. During the mealtimes the delegates had the opportunity to meet also on a human

level, and groups of teachers from countries such as Pakistan, Africa, China, Europe, Russia, USA, and more, shared ideas and inspiration with each other. Heinz Zimmermann closed the conference, and gave this guidance to the teachers:  
*"Encounter is to learn and to play. Begin to change things in the place where you are and do not be dogmatic. Be present in mind and spirit. The heart mediates between the head and the limbs. We must trust the efficacy of our education. We must cultivate the seed which is this education. Have the courage to cultivate free play- this is truly human. .... The young child is open and full of trust. To them, the world is good and worthy of imitation, this is basically a religious mood. The child always looks up, has an attitude, a mood of veneration, calm, of devotion, a relationship to the spirits in a mood of prayer. In the cultivation of this religious mood, this sacred sobriety, we see God in a child at play".*

Janni Nicol. SWSF

## European Masters for Steiner Waldorf Educators (EMPSWE)

On the 20th May more than 50 people attended the Dissemination Event of the Comenius-project (European MA in Steiner/Waldorf Education) in the premises of the British Council in Brussels. They came from 17 European countries and included European academics, officials from the Commission, representatives of various European NGOs and Waldorf educators from the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education.

The feedback was extremely heartening for the future of the emerging Masters Programme. Sean Feerick, from the European Commission, noted the resonance between the principles of the project and the proposals being put before the Council of Ministers later this year concerning the European Area for Higher Education. The whole event was enlivened by a choir of Steiner teacher training students from Hogeschool Helicon, Zeist. Professor Hans van Crombrugge, from Ghent University, gave a wider context to the proceedings and Dr David Parker enthusiastically explained the existing programme at Plymouth University within which the MA will reside. The Comenius funding is drawing to an end this autumn however with around 30 students already involved in pilot projects and a growing interest around Europe this venture is coming to a successful conclusion of its initial stage and embarking on its further consolidation and development.

Christopher Clouder & Griet Iona Hellinckx.  
EMPSWE  
[www.steinerwaldorfma.org](http://www.steinerwaldorfma.org)

## Reflections on the Easter Conference

Registration was at eleven o'clock. Among various documents laid out on a table was a stack of papers enticingly headed "Who runs a Steiner School?" This was surely it. If the paper was true to its title in answering the question, then we could each take a copy and head straight back home. The stack disappeared like ice in the sunshine. In the lunch queue the copies were eagerly perused and passed around. But the answer proved not so straightforward. That elusive "who" turns out to be all of us. In which case we had better stay put and see what we can learn.

Kevin Avison's opening presentation was an aural and visual treat. Computer generated graphics to illustrate the difference between hierarchy, holarchy and heterarchy and to explain the administrator's trinity of G-M-I (not a Frankenstein food but governance, management and implementation, or knowing what you're doing when you're doing it). Governance was to be a recurring theme of this conference, with the crucial distinction between governance and management mirroring the different responsibilities of Council and College and offering a way of structuring a relationship with which many schools evidently struggle.

John Frost-Evans, the administrator of Ringwood, gave a detailed presentation of how the Ringwood School had reinvented its organization on the strength - in part, at least - of this route map. He and Colin Lumber explored this further in a fascinating workshop on development planning, reviews and budgets. This double-act permitted participants to experience (since Colin is Chair of Ringwood's Council) the governance-management relationship in action. John led the workshop and Colin contributed wise and appropriate counsel in the discussions.

Other workshops were in leadership and meeting skills, mandates, sustainable decision-making and human resources. Among these I attended another memorable double-act - that of Kevin Avison and Jonathan Wolf-Phillips whose "gradient of support" method of decision-making was applied in role-play to a series of witty if alarming scenarios. Would your school re-brand itself as a Waldorf-McDonalds school if the money was right? If it refused, would you be in breach of your charitable obligations?

Trevor Mepham's Prescottian closing performance was a rousing reminder of all the things we are doing right in our movement, as well as the areas in which we can improve. He rightly identified what for many turned out to be the underlying theme of this conference, which is the balance between legislative requirement and moral action. We have so many hoops to jump through and boxes to tick these days that we are in danger of jumping and ticking just to satisfy the faceless bureaucrats from OFSTED or the CRB. We need to remind ourselves of the moral purpose of this activity, and not be afraid to question it when it interferes with the underlying impulse of our work.

Quite apart from its formal content, this conference was a great battery-recharger, and the venue itself contributed to this. The All-Saints Pastoral Centre, although worryingly identified by an internet location finder as somewhere in the central reservation of the M25, turned out to be a grand former convent set in parkland that separated it by a respectable margin from that noisy artery. The modest but sufficient comforts, all beautifully cared for, suggested the enduring influence, if not the presence, of the building's former occupiers. The retreat-like atmosphere thus engendered encouraged the spirit of reflection that is needed if an event of this sort is to have a lasting benefit.

Martin Whitlock, Administrator, South Devon

## New Building for Botton

About sixteen years ago, Botton School community saw the need for growth and raised money to create a beautiful new building, but as the years passed, it became clear that, beautiful as it was, it wasn't big enough: the classrooms were too small for the numbers of children we wanted in our classes, and there were not enough small rooms for all the one-to-one and small group work which needed to happen, not to mention meetings. So about four years ago the teachers outlined the problem to the wider school community to see if they could support the idea of raising money to build a new classroom block.

We spent a lot of time reflecting to find out what would be the best way forward; What exactly did we need, given that some rooms would be freed up for new uses?



What sort of building did we want? We all wanted a "green" building, but what precisely did that mean in our situation? How far were we prepared to go to raise more money to make it "greener"? Could we raise enough money? How much dare we borrow, when many of us would not be around to see the loan cleared?

The school community and the village rallied round with great enthusiasm, working hard to answer these questions and then to raise money for our new building project.

Two years ago, at Candlemas, we dedicated the site with an Earth-candle, as a central part of our festival, linked to the seasonal theme of the promise of good things to come. Over the two years that followed we watched with fascination as the building took shape before our eyes, until this winter we celebrated again at Candlemas, planting bulbs around our wonderful new building and dwelling on the different promise it offers for good things to come.

Classes 4/5 and 6/7 are now happily ensconced in palatial splendour, in our warm, airy and amazingly light new building, savouring the delight of having plenty of room to move about, at long last. The building has two large classrooms and two much smaller ones, as well as an office, a store room and a large lobby. It has ultra-efficient under-floor heating, earth-sheltering on the North and East sides, extra insulation and masses of natural light from the many sky-lights.

As many materials as possible were sourced locally, the main compromises being made for parts that were more durable or needed less maintenance, so that less energy would be spent on repair or replacement. Almost all the materials are natural or recyclable.

Even the building itself is recyclable, having no load-bearing walls, so that we can completely redesign the interior relatively cheaply, should our needs change.

We have been very lucky to have the active support of our school community and many generous benefactors, not least Botton Village/Camphill Village Trust who also helped us secure a favourable loan from the Camphill Social Fund.



*Simon Grimshaw. Class Teacher. Botton School*

### International Alliance for Childhood Conference 2005 Salzburg, Austria: 27-30 October 2005

For the love of learning:

Nurture, play and creativity as a foundation for life-long learning  
A conference focusing on key issues affecting early childhood.

Creative Childhood: International perspectives on learning through play  
Keynote speakers and workshop themes include: the power of play; storytelling; language development; nurturing the child; non-violent communication. This conference is the result of an alliance of individuals and organizations from a wide variety of backgrounds. What they have in common is their dedication to giving children the opportunity to be children and to develop accordingly in a healthy and balanced way. Among the speakers are Joan Almon, Christopher Clouder, Cathy Nutbrown and Fred Donaldson. Conference languages: German and English.

**Details and registration:**  
[www.allianceforchildhood.org.uk](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org.uk)

### News Network Anthroposophy

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The NNA is for

- sharing news of anthroposophically related events and developments
- sharing commentaries and analyses with an anthroposophical orientation
- sharing and coordinating translations of news and feature articles from the originating language to other languages.

NNA thus functions in principle as a newsagency gathering and distributing anthroposophically related material on a global basis.

Contributions should be sent to [news-in@nna-news.org](mailto:news-in@nna-news.org) This material is then edited and published on <http://www.nna-news.org/content/> and sent to anthroposophical periodicals via email. Articles are published in both English and German.

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### 'MUSIC OF THE HEART' CLARE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE 17-21 JULY 2005 [www.musicoftheheart.co.uk](http://www.musicoftheheart.co.uk)

Cambridge 'Music of the Heart' conference endorses the therapeutic and educational benefit of music and the humanising effect of the performing arts. Contributors include:

Nigel Osborne, Professor of Music

The Hilliard Ensemble

Sir John Tavener, Composer

Patricia Rozario, Soprano

Sir Magdi Yacoub, Heart Consultant

Brian Keenan, Author and Broadcaster

Applications and registration: [www.musicoftheheart.co.uk](http://www.musicoftheheart.co.uk) Enquiries: 01342-810133

*Elizabeth Carmack, Cambridge Music Conference*