

STATE FUNDING NEWS

The decision to refuse planning consent for the Hereford Steiner Academy will be challenged at a public inquiry in mid November. Local opposition to the development of the school site has escalated, mainly due the efforts of a very strongly opposed local resident who has set up CASE (the Campaign Against School Expansion) and the Much Dewchurch Society. However, the inquiry will be looking at the merits of the case entirely on planning grounds and, the outcome of the appeal, will be judged on planning issues only. The outcome should be known approximately 8 weeks after the Inquiry closes. However, if the time allotted for the Inquiry in mid November proves to be insufficient, then the hearing will be continued in the New Year.

Should the planning appeal fail, the DCFS have, in any case, given their support to opening a Steiner academy on the site in Much Dewchurch. There is an extant

permission scheme that had been granted planning consent just before the academy opportunity had been secured. It is very reassuring that ministers are prepared to go ahead with this Academy in spite of these planning difficulties, and despite the fact that these alternative plans would result in a much more modest school complex. This scheme is also less satisfactory from the point of view of the local objectors because it does not resolve their concerns about school traffic.

The proposals for a maintained Steiner school in Islington have been held up by a review of whether spending money from the public purse on the present school accommodation can be justified. If only the impossible would happen right now and someone offered a better site, then the rest would be straightforward and we would be able to build and run a flagship Steiner school in the capital!

SYLIVE SKLAN - SWSF

KILDARE STEINER SCHOOL - our new building

Work began on our new school building in June 2006. All materials used on the project were chosen carefully with utmost attention given to solid construction, energy efficiency and environmental impact.

Once the builders finally finished, the real work began in earnest. The teachers painted the interior. Wooden floors were laid, tiles were grouted, blackboards were hung and shelves were mounted. Outside topsoil was levelled and grass sown.

The finished building contains two good size classrooms with a fitted kitchen area in both. The school opened for business in Sept 2007.

AIDAN HARNEY -
KILDARE STEINER SCHOOL



LEARNING OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

After Easter we take Class 10 to Cornwall for 2 weeks where they have an integrated ecology main lesson. We teach out of the landscape and encourage the students to immerse themselves in their surroundings through accurate observation of plant and marine life, as well as empathetic responses to the sea, beach and cliffs.



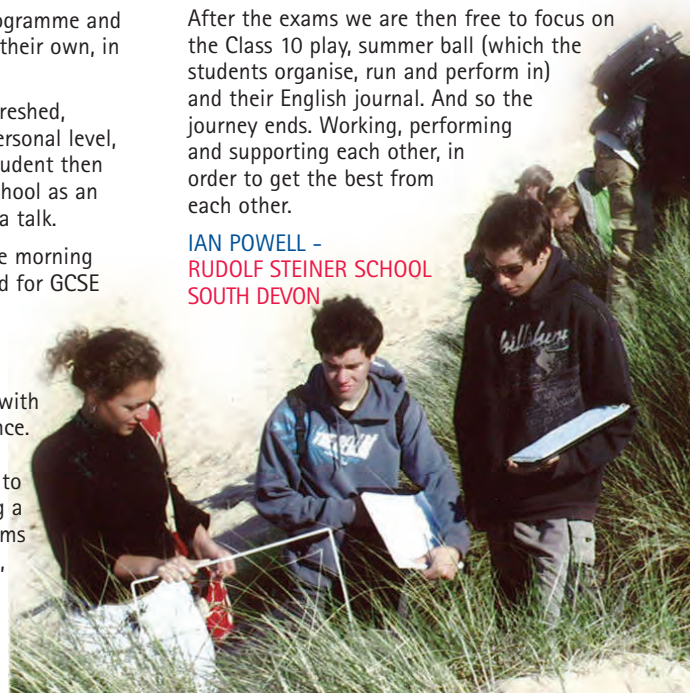
Pictures: Rudolf Steiner School South Devon - Class 10

For one week they follow our programme and for the second week they devise their own, in the form of a project.

The students return to school refreshed, having achieved so much on a personal level, as well as working hard. Each student then presents his/her project to the school as an exhibition and to the parents as a talk.

On their return there are no more morning lessons; this valuable time is used for GCSE revision.

We have found that students recognise this main lesson as a bringing to an end of their time with us and greatly value the experience. It can also be likened to taking a deep breath of all that is unique to Steiner education before meeting a different world: the world of exams and performance/goal orientated, prescribed learning.



After the exams we are then free to focus on the Class 10 play, summer ball (which the students organise, run and perform in) and their English journal. And so the journey ends. Working, performing and supporting each other, in order to get the best from each other.

IAN POWELL -
RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL
SOUTH DEVON

STEINER WALDORF SCHOOLS FELLOWSHIP (The Association of Steiner Waldorf Schools in the UK and Ireland)

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www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk info@swsf.org.uk Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowships Ltd. Produced by Christopher Clouder and Lara Cousins.

GATF Children's Fund

The Godparents Anthroposophical Training Fund has been running for over 30 years and the Children's Fund was set up to help pay fees/contributions in Steiner Waldorf schools. This is grant and loan money. We rely on donations, so the amounts given vary accordingly.

Last academic year we were able to award grants of £20,000 to 15 children in 7 schools plus a grant to one school's bursary fund to help pay for therapeutic lessons. This year we are awarding £28,500 to 31 children in 12 schools and kindergartens.

The Trustees are keen to increase fund so we can support more families. Grants are agreed annually in the autumn. All schools and kindergartens are sent a form to fill in to apply for help on behalf of families in need. We cannot accept requests direct from parents. Having allocated this year's money we are now looking for donations to help next year.

The Trustees give priority to families in need of short term help to keep the children in school for reasons such as poor health of a parent, loss of employment etc.

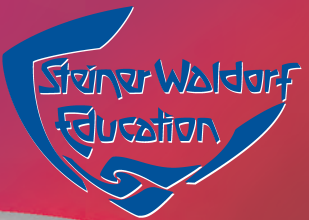
DONATIONS CAN BE SENT TO:
GATF, 11 Church Street,
Stourbridge DY8 1LT.
Cheques payable to 'GATF Children's Fund'.

JANE AVISON - GATF

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Newsletter

AUTUMN 2007



EARLY CHILDHOOD PROJECT UNVEILED

Last July, SWSF and the University of Plymouth held a research seminar in London, on the theme of "Assessment That Values Children's Learning". Colleagues from six Universities joined us, along with representatives from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE). Professor Richard Pring, Head of the Nuffield Review of Education and Training, 14-19, led the opening session of the day.

Following the seminar, discussions took place around the idea of a piece of research in the broad area of assessment practices in Steiner Early Years settings. The task of providing a practical insight into distinctive elements of the Steiner approach to assessment in the early years was identified.

This autumn, a research project has been launched by the University of Plymouth, the Hereford Steiner Academy Project and SWSF. The project will focus on the contribution of Steiner pedagogical practice to early years education. The initial aim of the study will be to develop an understanding of the principles and practice of Steiner early years pedagogy.

The core theme of the project will be to explore how, why and what teachers are seeking to observe, learn and understand about their children's growth, learning and development. The project will explore the importance of the 'narrative form' - each child's unique life-journey - in enabling the teacher to reflect on the child's nature and learning. The focus on observing the whole child - physical; emotional; cognitive; social - in preference to emphasising externally-generated check-lists of pre-determined learning outcomes and targets is likely to provide one fertile line of enquiry.

A Project Steering Group has been formed; the project will be led by Professor David Reynolds; writer and researcher Mary Jane Drummond* has agreed to work as a consultant to the project. The initial research work will centre on the early years settings at the Hereford School, although it is anticipated that other Steiner settings will be invited to take part. Janni Nicol and Sally Jenkinson will participate in the project as 'Steiner specialists' and colleagues from the Faculty of Education at the University of

Plymouth will undertake the gathering and analysis of data.

*Drummond MJ (2003), *Assessing Children's Learning*, London, David Fulton Publishers

TREVOR MEPHAM - SWSF



Picture: Harvesting of apples at Moray Steiner School

Align for learning 2008

Sixteen years ago Rosemary Gebert and Linda Churnside introduced the Waldorf Remedial Teacher Training Seminar at Michael Hall. The course ran for one year and approximately 20 colleagues completed it and went on to develop remedial departments throughout Steiner Waldorf schools in the UK.

Since then the need for Special Needs teachers has certainly grown while the facility to train has, for the most part, been relegated to in-service training of single individuals, short courses or some brief input within the context of the existing teacher training seminars.

January 2008 will see the launch of **ALIGN FOR LEARNING** - a Special Educational Needs (SEN) training seminar designed for both Steiner Waldorf teachers who seek to specialise in SEN, and for SEN teachers in the state sector who seek to broaden their understanding and scope for Learning Support from a Waldorf perspective.

The course will run for a weekend each month until December 2008 with Easter and summer intensive weeks. The course will address

factors that prevent children from gaining access to the curriculum- factors stemming from behaviour, learning, perception and/or motor difficulties.

Exploration into learning styles and teaching styles that can lead to effective means of accommodation, differentiation and integration will be central to the course content.

The weekends will combine relevant elements of:

- Movement/ games
- Literacy/numeracy
- Form drawing,
- Study,
- Theory, and models of understanding learning differences
- Professional administration

Between group weekends, participants will undertake individual assessments, design and implement Individual Education Plans (IEP), research and further independent study.

The course will be conducted by Ann Swain

with support from colleagues at Michael Hall. There will be weekend presentations from outstanding specialist such as:

Sally Goddard Blythe on motor development and reflex integration,
Camilla Leslie Johansen - Sound Therapist and specialist on auditory processing difficulties,
Mahesh Sharma - numeracy assessment and effective remediation,
Chris Guy - Bi-Lateral Integration and movement exercises.

These particular weekend presentations will be offered as single workshops opened to non course participants as well.

For more information contact Ann Swain, SWDA@another.com or tel: 01342 82 4740.

ANN SWAIN - MICHAEL HALL SCHOOL

Research

The webpage for the Waldorf Researchers and Educators Network (WREN) has now been incorporated into that of the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education www.ecswe.net.

Here you will find recent academic research that is either focused on Steiner education or subjects that are akin to it.

RESEARCH in Children's Drawing

A project examining the drawing ability of Steiner, Montessori and National Curriculum (mainstream) educated pupils has recently been carried out by researchers at Staffordshire University. One hundred and thirty five pupils, aged 5 to 9 year, completed six drawings. Three drawings required realistic drawing skills (a drawing of an artist's wooden mannequin, a drawing of a house, and a 'free' drawing), and three further drawings required expressive drawing skills (a happy, sad and angry 'free' drawing). These drawings were analysed by artists and researchers.

Findings relating to the three 'expressive' drawings indicated that compared to children attending mainstream and Montessori schools Steiner pupils tended to produce drawings that were rated more highly, particularly in respect of using the content, line and composition more expressively. Where there were differences between Montessori and mainstream children Montessori pupils tended to produce more highly rated expressive drawings. In respect of the 'realistic' drawing tasks there were no differences between mainstream and Montessori pupils. Although at age five Steiner pupils were less advanced in their realistic drawing compared to similar aged children attending Montessori and state schools, at age seven Steiner children produced the most realistic drawings. At age 9 there were no differences between the 3 educational approaches.

Alongside the statistical conclusions the researchers observed some anecdotal differences in how the children carried out the drawings. Steiner pupils often spent the greatest amount of time on their drawings regularly becoming very involved in their picture and the story it told. While this led to elaborate and very colourful drawings it often made it difficult to see what was being depicted in the drawing! When the artist's mannequin was presented for them to copy from they seemed to look especially carefully at the details compared with the other children in the study; however this did not seem to result in them producing more accurate representational drawings. At one Steiner school the Class 3 children were doing their building main lesson when the researcher visited to collect the drawings. As part of this main lesson the children were building a mud hut and this could be seen in the children's drawings as some of the drawings depicted mud huts when asked to draw a house!

The research findings are being presented at conferences and prepared for publication in an education journal. Moreover, the researchers are planning further studies, focussing on Steiner and National Curriculum schools, to investigate how the attitudes and practices of the teachers, parents and children themselves might influence the children's drawings and how actual classroom practices concerning the drawing education differ in the two educational systems.

SARAH ROSE, RICHARD JOLLEY & AMY IRWIN,
STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY.
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STEINER – Early Childhood Movement & New Regulations

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and registered providers (Independent kindergartens and those attached to all through Steiner Waldorf schools) are in discussion with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) regarding the requirements of the new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which will come into effect in September 2008.

The EYFS requires that early years providers need to work with the statutory requirements, and this includes the Learning and Development section which ask that we work towards early introduction to reading, writing and written numeracy. The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship is in discussion with the various government departments and has asked for exemption from this area.

To enable the issues to be clearly identified the Department has organised a conference in October for all Steiner schools and early years

settings to enable them to voice their concerns and try to find a solution which will allow the early years settings to continue to use the Steiner Waldorf early childhood curriculum without compromise.

The department recognises the value of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, and particularly the emphasis on play, as well as the way we observe children in all their developmental stages including the holistic education of the child – social, emotional, physical and intellectual. They will be initiating a series of consultation events on these themes, as well as further research.

We will report on the outcome in relation to the EYFS consultation and meetings in the next newsletter.

JANNI NICOL –
SWSF

Internation Association of Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE)

I attended the last meeting of this association, as the UK representative for early childhood. This was held in Finland in October 07, and was attended by 26 representatives of over 50 countries (some share a representative, e.g. South America) where there are schools, early childhood centres or new initiatives, either as kindergartens or teacher training.

The association IASWECE has the following goals and ideals to offer:

- cooperation among colleagues throughout the world through meetings, conferences, working groups, etc;
- deepening and renewing the work with the young child out of the sources of Waldorf education and support its quality;
- fostering training and continuing development of caregivers and early childhood educators;
- undertaking and supporting collaborative research on contemporary questions about the care and education of the young child;
- supporting collaboration with parents, other educators and the wider society about the needs of the young child;
- protecting the freedom and the name of Steiner/Waldorf early childhood education;
- providing resources, information and publications on Waldorf early childhood education and its programs worldwide;

- offering support – pedagogical and financial – for projects in countries around the world.

The Association includes kindergarten teachers, childcare and extended care providers, seminars and training courses and those who work with children from birth to three years.

In each meeting the group discusses trends, questions and burning issues facing children and families today, and tries to see how this can be addressed in an active way by the participants who take these questions back to their own country associations. The issues and study worked with in this meeting included play, the pressure of early formal education, communication difficulties, the culture of fear, movement (including early reflexes and motor skills), supporting parents and working with the picture of how Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood centres worldwide can address the needs of the child and the family in the 21st Century.

IASWECE also provides support to initiatives in countries in need, and this is done through fundraising throughout the member organisations. The UK early childhood centres are asked to fundraise for this work, and can direct the proceeds via the International Organisation to specific countries, kindergartens or initiatives, or into the general fund in order to sponsor teachers to attend conferences.

JANNI NICOL –
SWSF

THE HALL THAT GREW – South Devon's new building opens

It was during a rehearsal of that infamous 'Scottish play' 3 years ago, and the day after an all-school meeting to discuss the next stages of the school's physical development, that the fire broke out and destroyed our beautiful eurythmy hall, just a few years old and the product of huge effort by a small group of parents. We put up a large marquee elsewhere to serve as our all-purpose hall for the time being. Until then we had planned an upgrade of our Upper school as the next phase. Now we had to re-prioritise as our already overcrowded buildings came under even more pressure.

The old hall site became more of an agora, a relaxed open space at the heart of the school where people met, played games, or staged events. We grew to like it like that, and instead chose a sloping site at the edge of the school's small woodland. Underused and with good access, we soon realised the potential for digging down to allow for a two-storey development without making a disproportionate visual impact, and decided to fundraise for this; we would be able to satisfy nearly all the immediate accommodation needs by making four new classrooms at the lower level, a much larger hall than the old site allowed, a music room, kitchenette and mezzanine above. The architect and building contractor, both school parents, came up with a very striking timber framed design which would be extremely well insulated and yet very light, with large windows strategically placed to take advantage of the beautiful views.

The construction took about a year. The team worked so quietly and considerately that school life was unaffected, except to provide some interesting moments and visits for the children. It was good to see several skilled former pupils working on the building; they had had plenty of earlier practice repairing or building parts of their own Upper school!



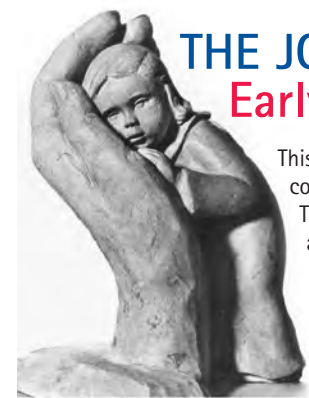
During the summer holidays there were major changes almost daily; access to the top level by way of an imposing bridge feature, landscaping, laying oak flooring, fitting-out, painting, plumbing, and all the bits and pieces, happened at an amazing rate.

At 8.40a.m on 5th September, the whole school gathered in the early sun. Class 8 led in the new Class 1, through the flowery arch, followed by all the other classes. The hall was formally opened with a trumpet fanfare, and a song from the teachers.

Other concerts, celebrations and events have followed and we will choose a suitable time for a more inward and meditative dedication when we have settled in.

The Middle School, the handwork teachers and the eurythmy teacher are all very much at home already; what a difference it makes to the whole school to have all this wonderful space, which the wider community are already beginning to recognise as a versatile venue with facilities for all kinds of cultural, social and educational events; it gives us the potential for so much good work in and beyond the school (as we hoped it would) and we are truly grateful to all concerned. Come and see us soon! And perhaps you can help us find the right name?

JENNY MILNE – DEVELOPMENT GROUP,
RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL SOUTH DEVON



THE JOURNAL FOR STEINER WALDORF Early Childhood Care and Education

This Journal contains articles, songs, stories and items off interest to anyone concerned with the young child and early childhood education and care. There is a main theme to each Issue, and it also contains information, articles, songs, stories, crafts and nature study. There are also Reviews, Parent and Child reports, Teacher Training information, Reports from the Kindergartens, Puppetry, book reviews, health and more.

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LIVING EDUCATION

The third edition of this online journal appeared in June with articles on early childhood and play, the new early childhood centre in Hong Kong and the philosophy behind giving children adequate time to learn. It is available, together with the previous two issues, at www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk. If you would like to receive future copies emailed directly to your in-box please contact the SWSF office at info@swsf.org

SWSF EASTER CONFERENCE

The Ringwood Waldorf School has been very busy preparing for the SWSF Easter Conference, which will take place from 4th – 8th April 2008. The subject will be 'The Twelve Senses and the Modern Child'.

Children today have to contend with a rapidly moving and exciting, but often contradictory, world that can impact upon the delicate unfolding and weaving of their senses. This, in turn, affects their relationship to the world and to themselves. It is a major subject of interest to all those connected with the care and education of children, and goes to the very root of our work.

We have been pleasantly surprised by the number and quality of speakers and workshop leaders from all areas of Waldorf Education both here and abroad, who are keen to take part. The speakers will address issues from the healthy development of the lower senses in the Early Years to a picture of the adolescent where sensory integration has, for various reasons become distorted, and how this can be allowed to harmonise. We shall also be exploring the Sense of Aesthetics.

The main speaker will be Torin Finser who is a Waldorf Teacher, author and Director of the Antioch Teacher Training Course, U.S.A. He will present the wider context and will also be presenting a series of workshops on working with schools and organisations as living organisms. The conference will also be opened up to any administrators who are interested in this work.

ELAINE HOLT –
RINGWOOD WALDORF SCHOOL

WORLD CONFERENCES

Waldorf Early Childhood Educators

The next IASWECE world conference will be held in New Hampshire, USA on 2-6 August 2008. This conference is titled MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD TODAY, and addresses the development of the child from pre-birth to age 7, and the development of the adult caring for and educating the child.

Further information www.iaswece.org

Waldorf Teachers Conference

Every four years this conference takes place in Dornach with well over 1000 participants. Next year it will run from the evening of 24 March 2008 until midday on the 29th and the theme will be *Educating the Will: Awakening the Head Spirit*.