

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL EDUCATION - an International Study

How would you describe a well-rounded education? Many people would say that the traditional process of intellectual and academic training should go hand-in-hand with healthy physical, psychological and social growth so that pupils can achieve satisfactory levels of well-being, balance and personal and social contentment. Governments around the world are showing more and more interest in what is now known as Social and Emotional Education, because it is widely recognised that helping young people to become self-motivating, competent, responsible and mutually supportive members of society is in the interests of everyone.

Steiner schools, of course, have always aimed for an education for head, heart and hands, so it was natural that, when the Marcelino Botin Foundation in Cantabria, Spain decided to conduct international research into the benefits of promoting social and emotional educational programmes within schools they decided to approach Christopher Clouder of the SWSF.

Christopher Clouder assembled an international team of experts for the task, including Bo Dahlin from Karlstad University in Sweden and Harm Paschen from Bielefeld University in Germany. The resulting study, "Social and Emotional

Education - an International Survey" has just been published and provides a comprehensive examination of social and emotional education, its theory and effects.

"As well as being written in an accessible style the study contains a meta-analysis of all the studies on social and emotional learning done over the last ten years and we have now found by looking at this that we can find measurable outcomes," says Clouder.

"We are able to show in evidence-based form that approaching the child in this way is beneficial in the sense that there is a reduction in criminality, reduction in drug abuse, more pro-social behaviour, less antisocial behaviour and better academic achievement by the children," he added.

The Marcelino Botin Foundation commissioned the survey as a result of its work with schools in the Spanish region of Cantabria, where it was developing new ways of education. "It wanted to know what was happening outside the province and thought it should look around the world to find out where experience has been built up," Clouder explains.

The contact with Clouder was established through a parent at one of the Madrid Waldorf schools which led to him presenting a proposal

to the Foundation: "I did explain I was a Waldorf teacher, not a professor, but they said that's what we want, we want it based in the classroom, we want it very practical, what can be done, what is the experience, what has happened in these schools, how can we inspire others and learn ourselves to approach the children in a better way."

The 300-page study has initially been published in Spanish and English and is aimed at policy-makers and practitioners. Clouder stresses that it is intended to bring about change and not just to be another purely academic exercise - "not just another report to go on another shelf".

"It is very readable, describes visits to schools, the reactions of the children, what we've seen. It aims to inspire people to approach mainstream education in a new way and bridge the gap between approaches such as the Waldorf schools and the mainstream," Clouder said.

Now that the study has been published, the Foundation is busy distributing the book to educational administrators, think tanks, politicians and journalists throughout Europe. Christopher Clouder is already thinking ahead: "There are all kinds of ideas, but I would like to set up a sort of think tank, an independent international platform to explore innovative and creative education based on this report.

For the full report see www.socialandemotionaleducation.org

Newsletter

SPRING 2009



THE HEKIMA WALDORF SCHOOL

Dar es Salaam is as intriguing as its name is beautiful and exotic. Here in the capital city of Tanzania can be found a young Waldorf school.

The Hekima (Swahili for wisdom) Waldorf School serves about 200 pupils from KG to Class 7 and is now just over 10 years old. Nationally, primary school ends at that age. Classes average about 20 pupils, a large percentage of whom come from comfortable family backgrounds with parents working in business, education and government. A smaller, yet significant number of children have very different backgrounds. Many are deprived and a large number orphaned. Within the classroom and at first sight, there are no apparent differences between the children. They are all happy young children, who are amenable, keen to learn and eager to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and enthusiasm. During each of my visits to the school I have spent only a relatively short time with the students and teachers, yet I feel an integral part of its rhythm and vision.

Some years ago, the East African Easter Conference was held in the Hekima school grounds during which time many hopes, wishes and promises were declared with a mind to developing anthroposophy in East Africa and strengthening the school. The school has encountered a number of challenges in its current premises, some threatening its very existence. The declarations made at the conference still live in many who were there; some dreams are coming to life.

The School has purchased a plot of land on a lush hilltop some miles away from the town. A huge amount of effort has resulted in water now being piped to the site and more recently planning permission being granted for the school buildings. Commencement of building works is close and much needed so that the school can move from their existing rented premises. The new site will make the provision of a curriculum covering KG, primary and upper school possible.



Picture: Pupil from Hekima Waldorf School

Waldorf education is well received by Tanzanians; however, they remain cautious of its tenuous existence and require it to be established in concrete terms. The Tanzanian government have high regard for professionals, particularly teachers, the profession of the beloved First President Julius Nyerere. The staff of Hekima are highly dedicated and skilled but poorly paid; all have sacrificed a lucrative lifestyle afforded by teaching in the mainstream. They struggle on a salary the payment of which takes second place to the payment of rent for the school and other expenses; often payment of salaries is erratic and delayed. Moving to the new site with an increase in pupil numbers will play an important role in the future of the school.

Training of teachers in East Africa takes place in the Nairobi school. In order to complete the training process and gain certification, teachers must be mentored for a short period at the end of their training. The Tanzanian government accept the Waldorf Training but

require it to be certified. However, mentors are in short supply and are generally not resident in East Africa.

There are many children whose fees are paid through private sponsors or through the Freunde without which most of the orphaned children would be unable to attend.

In 2007, the Canterbury Steiner School hosted a teacher from Hekima, Edward Mwanga, on a 6-week visit as part of his teaching practice. He charmed everyone at the school and a close relationship between both schools has since developed. Edward's mentoring was completed when I visited Hekima and observed him for a two-week period. We are expecting a kindergarten teacher to visit our school in the summer as part of her extended teacher training.

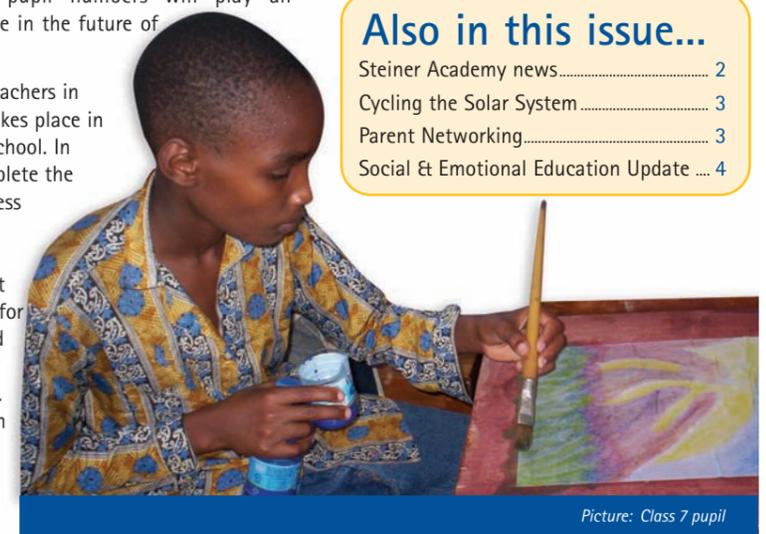
The pupils, parents and staff of Canterbury Steiner School have continued to support the Hekima School through contributions of goods, fundraising and goodwill. Steve Chambo, the internal co-ordinator acknowledged that all such contributions are invaluable but has explained that the Hekima School continues to be inspired and strengthened simply by the fact that people take an interest in it.

We hope to continue our support in a tangible way.

ROSE KAREMI -
CANTERBURY STEINER SCHOOL

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Picture: Class 7 pupil

REBUTTING WALDORF CRITICS

As we go about our busy lives, content in the knowledge that we are trying to do the best for our children, it would hardly occur to us that other people might question our good intentions.

However, once you enter the world of the Internet and Google for Steiner Waldorf, you rapidly become aware that there are now many attacks being made on Steiner Waldorf education in Internet forums and blogs. The kind of statements that are being made can make your blood run cold; such is their malevolence and hatred. This has been a feature of life for schools in the USA for a number of years but it has now spread over here to the point where prospective parents may actually be dissuaded from choosing a Steiner school for their child.

The people making these attacks are comparatively few in number but they are obsessive and trawl the internet and blogosphere for potential threads that they can use to post anti-Steiner misinformation and scare stories, under a variety of different aliases.

I have recently become involved in trying to rebut some of the more outrageous online stories. For example, a web log (blog) put up by a young mother who talks about her experiences as the parent of a young son. In one posting, she wrote that she has been thinking about sending her son to her local Steiner school. Almost immediately, her blog received postings from anti-Waldorf critics who tried to put her off the idea with a series of alarmist posts alleging all sorts of nonsense about cults, brainwashing, racism etc. Fortunately, on this occasion, I (and others) have been able to give a more accurate picture of our schools, together with examples of the lies and distortions peddled by the Waldorf Critics, and I think the young mother is now at least willing to go and visit the school and come to her own conclusions.

I would be very grateful if teachers and parents who share these concerns would be willing to join me in posting replies to anti-Waldorf threads in an attempt to give a more accurate picture to the outside world of what Steiner education is all about. We are also co-

ordinating this internationally through the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education. Please contact me at smithj@rssl.org if you are interested in becoming involved.

JEREMY SMITH, SWSF Communications Officer

WOODLANDS - GREENWICH STEINER SCHOOL

As you may remember from Issue 28, Greenwich Steiner School has moved to Woodlands, a beautiful Georgian Grade 2* listed mansion.



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STEINER ACADEMY HEREFORD

For those in the midst of this step change to an Academy, it can feel like the changes are taking rather a long time to fall into place. Yet, it seems unbelievable that only 11 months ago we were still in the final throes of the Public Inquiry, watching for any hint that might indicate what the Planning Inspector was thinking as the barristers summed up the case for and against granting planning consent for a purpose-built Steiner Academy at Much Dewchurch. It was only 10 months ago that the news broke that the Public Inquiry had been unsuccessful. Bearing in mind how recent that phase of uncertainty was, it is quite remarkable that the Steiner Academy has already started its second term and everything seems to be going very well, even if the building works are causing lots of mud and an incredible shortage of space whilst some of the old is removed to make way for the new. Also old systems for how things have been done are being removed to make way for the new and this too, in the words of Alison Gebert, the Chair of the College of teachers, feels like 'wading in mud' at times.

She explains how *'We found ourselves returning from the summer holidays to a new and unfamiliar incarnation of our school. The school we returned to looked the same. But we*

knew it was different. We knew that, as a state school, there would be certain new requirements. We do not fully understand what implications these requirements will actually have and there are still areas where it is really difficult to reach clarity. We are trying to pick our way carefully, making sure that we do not lose sight of the spiritual light which has guided our school from its first foundation. But the change has not altered our way of meeting the needs of the children who come to us and this remains our primary focus. We know that it is going to carry on being difficult for some time as we learn to know and govern our new self, but I feel confident that we will come through it with a larger, stronger and more beautiful school, a clearer and better focused soul space and a spiritual light which shines as strongly as ever. In the meantime we need your positive thoughts and prayers.'

From the point of view of others, the benefits have been quite clear. There are many both in this country and further a field who regard the Steiner Academy as having potential to enhance the educational landscape of this country. They are excited by the new possibilities that this development creates for the children in Herefordshire and beyond. For example, Clare Hanbury Leu, Director of the

Child-to-Child Trust and closely associated with University of London's Institute of Education, is impressed by the significance of what has been achieved by the Fellowship in negotiating state funding for the Steiner curriculum. In her view, *'the fact that the Steiner Academy exists now as part of state education gives this curriculum legitimacy. Its new position will inspire other educators. It also shows that the Government is beginning to think outside the box.'*

SYLVIE SKLAN - SWSF

EASTER CONFERENCE

This year's Easter Conference for Teachers, with the theme of "World Wide Waldorf", will be held from April 5-9 at the Rudolf Steiner School, Kings Langley. Speakers include Virginia Sease, from the Vorstand at Dornach, who will give a series of three lectures on the destiny of the Waldorf movement in the world, Trevor Mephram, newly appointed principal of the Steiner Academy Hereford, talking about the school's journey from private to public independence, and Christopher Clouder, of the SWSF and ECSWE, speaking about the international context and challenges. There will be a range of themed discussions, artistic activities, workshops and presentations and a performance by the Northern Foundation Stone Eurythmy Group.

STEINER WALDORF ADVISORY SERVICE - In-service Courses and Research

The Steiner Waldorf Advisory Service began its work within the SWSF with the single aim to provide classroom mentoring for Class Teachers. Very soon Early Years advisers and upper school advisers were added to the service and there were requests for other types of consultative help, in-service including workshops. We referred to the original classroom advising as "external mentoring" because it comes from advisers who visit schools across the whole Waldorf movement, additional to a school's own in-house collegial support. Nonetheless, advisers work closely with the mentoring procedures in place in the schools and have, in fact, done much to support and encourage the development of those procedures. The "outsider" though may notice things that those who are "at home" have ceased to notice. Thus while individual schools are responsible for the professional development of their staff; advisers provide a wider context and can bring fresh eyes to situations that may become dulled by custom and habit.

Although run on limited resources, the service has brought about a resurgence of in-service courses, often contributing to INSET days, in addition, and supports or initiates curriculum research wherever possible. The results of two such pieces of work, on sex education and "active citizenship" can be found via the advisory page of the SWSF website, or at <http://curriculumresearch.blogspot.com/>

Because advisers seek to promote best practice, their task is inevitably one that entails action research. Regular advisory meetings aim to identify the most important learning points, which are regularly reported to the SWSF Association (the representatives of the various member schools). Such research informs the in-service courses SWAS advisers are able to provide or which we publicise and help organise. As there is no single conference centre, we are always grateful to schools that are willing to offer to act as hosts. Some longer courses would be possible if the hosting was available.

The following list provides an overview of current activity in addition to classroom advice:

- In-service courses to help teachers prepare for their next class, usually lead by experienced teachers who are just completing that class group. Courses in the dance curriculum and blackboard drawing are arranged for the spring term;
- Last year two meetings were held to explore the effective development of literacy. Work is underway to provide increased resources for class teachers embarking on the this with their classes;
- An overview is in preparation of the ways in which young people can be educated in the sensible risk management, or "risk literacy" drawing from good practice in Waldorf and mainstream education;

- With the assistance of the Crossfields Institute, SWAS has undertaken to co-ordinate a feasibility study of OCN, and/or other alternative forms of schools leaving certification for UK schools;
- SWAS responds to requests for workshops for INSET days. Currently workshops on Collegial Mentoring and Appraisal and Pupil Behaviour Management are available;
- SWAS can provide extended support and advice for school governance and organisational questions in its own right and through an extended "Associate Advisers" scheme. SWAS takes part in the regular meeting of the Steiner Waldorf Administrators' Network co-ordinated by Jane Avison, SWSF finance administrator. This also includes help with preparation for Ofsted inspection and regular contact with the Inspectorate.

We aim to be a resource for schools and early childhood settings, responding to their needs and co-ordinating a Steiner Waldorf response to issues of the kind indicated above. People working in our schools have many excellent initiatives and where it can and where appropriate, SWAS attempts to facilitate the making of the practical fruits of those initiatives available to all colleagues.

For further information or to make suggestions for improvement, contact: swas@steinerwaldorf.org also see <http://swasviews.blogspot.com>

KEVIN AVISON - SWSF

CYCLING THE SOLAR SYSTEM

For many years now, almost since WOW Day started, York Steiner School has been raising about £2000 by doing a whole school sponsored cycle ride at Michaelmas time. In 2008 we made £2490. We are very fortunate that the Selby Cycle Way which follows a disused railway line starts close to school and only crosses one road. The route is very safe and level, passing through fields and over the River Ouse twice. Along part of its length there is a scale model of the solar system, so we can measure the distance travelled by whether we made it to Jupiter, Pluto, or even beyond to Selby!

Our annual ride has become an important school tradition and we really miss it when for instance the river floods are so deep and prolonged that we can't go (as in 2000). The children look forward to the ride and enjoy extending the distance they manage year by year. Class One usually do a walk instead and Class Eight generally go right into Selby (13 miles) to have well-earned fish and chips.

Recent records show that between 2002 and 2008 we have contributed £12,042 to WOW funds. We are proud to have helped the projects WOW supports and we have had a lot of fun on the way.

HELEN MACKFALL
YORK STEINER SCHOOL

For more information about WOW, that over the last 10 years has raised 1,200,000 euros for children all over the world see www.ecswe.org



Picture: York Steiner School's annual bike ride for WOW

State primary school is enthused by Steiner Waldorf gymnastics

Last October Michael Hall School held a novel event - a Saturday morning opportunity for parents and education professionals to experience SW education in the classroom in exactly the same way the school's pupils do.

All who took part judged "A day in the classroom" a big success. The day was such a positive experience for one state school primary teacher that she immediately resolved to take the Steiner Waldorf gymnastics experience back to her own school in North London. Louise de Ayala, who teaches year 1 (ages 5-6) at Courtlands Primary in Mill Hill, was so inspired by Martin Baker's teaching that she invited him to come to London to teach the children in her school for a day. So, a rather apprehensive group of teachers met with Martin, who was to spend his day working with each class and then having discussion time with teachers afterwards.

Louise told us that instead of being tired at the end of a long day, she and her colleagues left the school feeling invigorated.

The teachers appreciated the way the games and stories were all chosen to suit the different age groups. The teachers were amazed at the involvement of some of their more challenging pupils. A girl who suffers from weight problems suddenly began moving around in an unselfconscious way; an SEN child became totally caught up in his lesson. A quiet child opened up. One year 5 student declared: "He was the best PE teacher I have ever had."

For teachers and pupils alike, it was indeed a very rewarding day.

CHRISTIAN LEWIN,
COMMUNICATIONS CO-ORDINATOR,
MICHAEL HALL SCHOOL

UK Parent network

UK Parent Network is delighted to invite you to their inaugural meeting on SATURDAY 14TH MARCH, 09:30 - 17:00 at Michael Hall School in Sussex

Join us to share your thoughts and experiences of being a Steiner Waldorf parent in 21st Century Britain.

This is a new group run by parents, for parents, which aims to support them on their journey through Steiner Waldorf education. Be there at the outset and help shape this group into a resource for us all. In this spirit we encourage you, when replying, to let us know what you would like to see included in the programme for the day.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided by Michael Hall's PTFA. Free B&B can be provided Friday and/or Saturday night for those travelling a long distance.



ELIANT - your signatures count!

In the summer issue of 2008, we explained what the Eliant campaign was all about. ELIANT aims, by means of its goal of collecting a million signatures, to ensure that there is a strong baseline of support to establish 'a legal basis for cultural diversity in the fields of education, agriculture and medicine'. This process gives ordinary citizens influence over policy and decision making in Brussels, under the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). Last year, some of our schools invited members of the ELIANT team to their events, raising the profile of the campaign locally.

In their January Newsletter, the ELIANT team reported that the total number of signatures was 677,618 from a total of 145 countries and the number is increasing by about 1,000 daily! 18,534 of those votes came from Great Britain - a huge increase on the previous year. However, if the million-signature goal is to be achieved by the end of this year, then your signatures count.

You may be planning summer activities and events already. Why not include information on the campaign - a stall, posters, leaflets or signature slips? An effective way to contribute is to send e-mails to friends and colleagues with a link to the online signature collection.

For more information visit www.elaint.eu or e-mail info@elaint.eu

VIVIEN BAPAT -
SWSF Office

The formation of this new group has been actively supported by the SWSF and we have invited Christopher Clouder (Chief Executive, SWSF) and Jeremy Smith (Communications Officer for SWSF and parent) to join us for the day.

For replies or further information:

Christian Lewin phone 01342 827919 or email christian.lewin@michaelhall.co.uk