

ISWPN SEMINAR IN OSLO

Oslo is a beautiful city. It was a delight to look at the many beautiful, old buildings and walk among tall, majestic trees on my way to Rudolf Steinerhøyskolen where the meeting was held.

There were 15-25 people attending the meeting throughout the weekend of September 24th-26th. The group consisted of caring and inspiring people from eight countries: Finland, France, England, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Two of us from Iceland; coincidentally having received the information about this meeting – neither of us had any idea that this sort of thing even existed!

We both became so inspired by listening to what the other participants shared about their own school and country that we spent half an hour Saturday night on a street corner planning all the things we were going to make happen in Iceland! In fact, we became so inspired by the meeting that next year's meeting will take place in Iceland.

Many excellent issues were brought to our attention throughout the meeting. Godi Keller asked a very important question that we worked on in groups to answer: 'What can we, as parents, legitimately demand from the teachers?' The answers were, not unexpectedly, focused around respect for the child, dialogue and information flow as well as teacher qualification and upholding academic standards.

We shared stories of success, growth and increased governmental support.

One such story was how the Norwegian Parents Association has been a major influence in affecting a change of educational law. As we listened to the story, it became apparent that one of the main reasons for their success was due to the Teachers Association having cultivated an ongoing relationship with politicians, enabling and cultivating a climate of trust, to such an extent that the teachers have been asked to consult on several issues.

I believe this is something we all must take to heart if we wish to strengthen the Steiner Waldorf presence in our respective countries. Politicians make the laws and the more they know and understand Steiner Waldorf pedagogy the more supportive they will be.

Another lesson the Norwegians shared was the fact that the politicians respect parents' point of view more so than the teachers! It makes sense when you think about it and clarifies once more how important parents are for the continuing successful existence and growth of the Steiner Waldorf schools.

Sadly, there were also stories from some countries of the financial crisis threatening the Steiner Waldorf schools, non-supportive governments as well as lack of cooperation between schools.

Örjan Retsler, our representative from the

European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE), suggested that parents could benefit by the creation of a formal European Waldorf Steiner Parents Association. In discussing this idea, we decided for now to remain an open forum for networking, however maybe take it up again at next year's meeting. Perhaps, as one participant pointed out, when the need is really there, the parents of all countries will rise in strength together?

One of the most important things we learned from each other was that perhaps not the same model would be appropriate or even applicable in all situations. Differences between Steiner Waldorf schools ignite a creative dynamic that none of us wish to see regulated out of existence. This brings us to one of the most beautiful aspects of Steiner Waldorf education: individual differences, whether people, schools or countries, are to be treasured, honored and celebrated.

By the end of the meeting we, both as parents and members of society, were all inspired to become change agents and do our own personal best to strengthen the Steiner Waldorf presence back home.

GITTE LASSEN
HEAD OF PARENTS ASSOCIATION AT THE
WALDORF SCHOOL IN LÆKJARBOTN
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Iona School takes to the land for the season of Michaelmas

At Iona School we are fortunate to have more than an acre of wonderful green outdoor space. During Michaelmas last year we abandoned the classroom for a week and took the children on the land to work on a number of valuable projects.

The experience was so rewarding that we took the opportunity over St. Johns to spend more

time together outside as a school. We are now back working on our second Michaelmas Land Week.

Our projects have included a new pond, a large sand pit, a six metre long dragon, weeding and planting strawberry beds, willow weaving and more. Along with teachers and parents, the children work in age groups from classes 1 to

6. Kindergarten children play on the land during the week and often participate with enthusiasm. The children feel a great sense of ownership of the tasks they undertake and it is a vital experience for the older children to support the younger ones.

MARIA WOOLLEY
IONA SCHOOL



Pictures: Michaelmas Project at Iona School

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

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Newsletter

AUTUMN 2010



CLEMENTINA SCHOOL Is Officially Recognised

There are few occasions when one is given the opportunity to create a completely new educational establishment, however that was the wonderful opportunity that arose a couple of years ago near Canterbury, Kent.

All we had at the beginning were two children eager to learn, a snug classroom within Canterbury Steiner School, and a somewhat vague idea that we would set up a school.

It was not long before the daily routine brought teacher and pupils together and made it possible for a small kernel of a school to slowly mature. The children's reactions and their progress was proof that there was a lot of potential in our venture, but we needed official recognition to be able to open it to a wider group of children.

Our registration as an Independent Special School came a few weeks ago and we are now officially a school! We are able to admit up to 5 pupils aged 7 to 12 years old.

Due to the specialised experience of our staff, we can cater for the following range of special needs:

- Autistic Spectrum Disorder;
- Specific Learning Difficulties (including Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dys-calculia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder);
- Speech and Language difficulties;
- Mild Learning Difficulties.

Within the grounds of Canterbury Steiner School, we offer curative education, which draws on separate and specific elements of

Steiner's philosophy. While curative education uses an adapted Steiner curriculum as a therapeutic tool, the focus of our work concentrates on the medical constitution of the child. This is based on the assumption that the physical, emotional or intellectual challenges that disability poses to the child affects their ability to reach out towards the world. In children with special needs these life forces are directed inwards well after the first 7 years of life and it requires all the child's (and often the parents, teachers and therapists') will to master skills that would otherwise become second nature, such as digesting, sleeping or sitting still, tying ones' shoe laces or processing sensory information so as to use it purposefully. Clementina addresses this imbalance medically with the help of our school doctor, therapeutically with rhythmical massage, therapeutic art or occupational therapy and educationally through an adapted delivery of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. We are expanding the range of therapists that can contribute to our team, and are currently seeking to work with a Speech and Language Therapist.

We use the wealth of resources found locally to design individual programmes for each child. These programmes are recorded in the Individual Educational Plan, and all adults (parents and carers, as well as Clementina's professionals) meet during regular "Child Studies" to define the therapeutic aims that will help the child make the next step in their development.

One of our practical projects last year was to incubate and hatch eggs. The children witnessed the chick's first steps in life until they were ready to move on to a local chicken coop. This activity was planned to give the opportunity to practice fine motor skills by making the box in which the chicks would be kept, but also to practice simple maths by measuring its components to the appropriate length. We also had to practice conversational skills, as we had to cater for the many visitors that came to "see the chicks!" This kind of simple, day to day activity is at the heart of what we are trying to do: it offers a coherent experience of the world while calling for more academic skills to be used in context. The wide range of activities that such a project involve allows all children to participate at their level and to feel part of a social group in a meaningful manner.

For further information please contact us at info@clementinaschool.co.uk (website to follow shortly). Tel 079 865 853 19

CECILE REMY
CLEMENTINA SCHOOL



Picture: Children at Clementina School

FREE SCHOOLS

There has been overwhelming interest in the coalition government's Free School policy from our schools. Several schools have submitted applications; although to date there are no applications from Steiner schools that have been put forward by the Department for Education (DfE) to the next stage. Most of the schools in England that haven't applied are considering doing so. However, the SWSF is neither urging nor dissuading schools to become Free Schools. Such a step is a decision that each school must make for itself. Clearly, it will not suit every Steiner school and for some schools it will not be possible.

We see our role as supporting the application

process where we can and we continue to urge all schools who have applied or who are considering doing so, to keep us informed. This helps us to maintain an overview, thus allowing us to liaise effectively with the DfE and Ministers on behalf of Steiner schools in England.

Free Schools will have to conform to all the requirements of the Academy legislation. There is therefore considerable interest in how the Steiner Academy Hereford (SAH) has managed to adapt to these requirements without compromising the ethos and we will continue to use the Moving Forward seminars as the forum to examine this. The next seminar, planned for the end of January, will be held at the SAH. The day will include a tour of the site and an opportunity to see the new classrooms

that have been finished. The programme will deal with the issues that were requested by those who attended the Moving Forward seminar in October and staff from SAH will address several of the sessions. However, please do not contact SAH for further details; this is an SWSF organised event. We will be sending out more information very soon and taking bookings. All schools will be welcome to send representatives and full notes from the day will be circulated. We hope schools will see this as a useful way to find out more.

There will be a further opportunity to visit the SAH and meet the teachers on their Open Day on 14th May, 2011.

SYLVIE SKLAN SWSF

New school planned for West Yorkshire

The town of Hebden Bridge, and the Calder Valley in which it nestles, has for many years been home to a Steiner Kindergarten, as well as parent and child groups for 0-3s. Following our recent move and now purchase of larger premises, we will at last be able to grow from a kindergarten into a school. Our new home is an old Sunday School in the nearby village of Cragg Vale, set within the grounds of the local parish church, St. John in the Wilderness, and surrounded by spectacularly beautiful countryside.



We currently have two kindergartens flourishing alongside our parent and child work. During the coming year we will be undertaking further renovation and refurbishment work to the building before welcoming our first Class 1 in September 2011. From there we shall continue the process of creating a lower school.

RICHARD BUNZL
CALDER VALLEY STEINER EDUCATION
www.hebdensteiner.com

BOTTON SCHOOL CELEBRATES 50 YEARS – Facing a Paradox?

Pupils at Botton Village School celebrated the school's fiftieth birthday in September with an afternoon of games and country dancing. We enjoyed a delicious chocolate cake with 50 candles that was kindly baked for the children by a parent and a local band provided music. A further celebration for former pupils and teachers took place in October.

Originally only for families working in the Botton Village Camphill Community, the school now educates 3 to 14 year olds from the North York Moors area. Over the years, a relatively high proportion of the school's non-Camphill families have moved into the area, specifically attracted by the school. In 1960, the eight original pupils were educated in the sitting room of one of the Village houses. Then for a time the school was housed in wooden huts where teachers had to begin the day by lighting wood-burning stoves. The present splendid buildings date from 1990 and were further added to in 2005. Pupil numbers reached a peak of about a hundred in the early nineties when Martyn Rawson and Andrew Dyer were employed to pioneer an upper school project, which also involved the York school. Despite a bold curriculum vision the project was sustained for only one year. Since

then pupil numbers have gently settled back, with a higher proportion of pupils now living outside the Camphill Village.

Visiting other areas, I am sometimes aware of waiting lists, families struggling to afford Waldorf education, schools seeking buildings that might more adequately contain pupil numbers. Then I return to fifty-year-old Botton School – beautiful rural setting, 'good' inspection rating, support from Camphill, well staffed, a very affordable contributions system, excellent buildings – relatively few pupils.

MICHAEL DRAKE
BOTTON VILLAGE SCHOOL



Picture: Botton pupils celebrate

CHANGE AND CONSOLIDATION – at Cambridge Steiner School

As we move with our children through the richness of autumn into the reflective spirit of winter, we at Cambridge Steiner School are gradually feeling a sense of strength and consolidation settling through the school after a busy period of change.

The hard work of teachers, parents, trustees and our new administrative staff have seen our school turn around. New (full!) parent and child groups and the Buttercups Little Kindergarten are opening their welcoming arms to the youngest of our children and another kindergarten is planned. New workshops and singing groups have also sprung from our energised community as well as new ideas.

One of these initiatives was the Woodland Kindergarten project. Last September, Elderflower Kindergarten began spending two days each week in our local Nature Reserve. As teacher Beate Guertler-Green says,

The magic of the woodlands and meadows really inspires the children's imaginative and creative play. We see growing confidence and a stronger sense of cooperative community spirit



Cooking soup over fire, making earth candles, exploring and being absorbed by nature has helped children and teachers develop a sustained fascination for the world which changes around us. This year more of our kindergartens are sharing in this natural experience.

The last twelve months has also seen our school welcome new teachers from abroad, including Holland, Australia and the United States, who bring their knowledge of Waldorf education from around the world to benefit our school. The international feel of our teaching faculty reflects the diversity of our community of families in and around Cambridge.

The support our school has found over the past twelve months has been amazing and we would like to thank everyone who has been involved. May all our new initiatives take root and flourish!

HELEN EAST
CAMBRIDGE STEINER SCHOOL

Picture (left): Kindergarten children at creative play

CYCLING AT SOUTH DEVON STEINER SCHOOL

Cycling is becoming a more consistent part our school curriculum and is slowly seeping by osmosis into the school community. Much of this is down to Andrew Holdstock's work over the years. Natascha and I have also qualified as coaches and this article is an attempt to contextualise what we have developed so far and to see how it fits into the Waldorf movement curriculum.

We start in Class 5. This is the classic time of the so-called 'cycling proficiency', which many of us did in our own school days. In our course, the children practise handling the bicycle in various ways including use of brakes and gears and being able to look behind and signal without wobbling. We take them on the cycle path and begin road awareness in a safe environment. We also do a simple bike safety check. This corresponds to the National Standards Level 1. Class 5 is the year of the Greeks where balance is a keynote. They have reached a balance between heaven and earth and playful practise of balance on a bicycle fits in well.

The next level of cycling involves going on the road. Ideally, we would do this in Class 6. However, the roads around our school are particularly fast and in our culture many children just have not had enough practice of simply being on their bike. We therefore decided with Class 6 to go regularly on the cycle path to the gym at Foxhole, Dartington where we do games and to do some practise rides on the cycle path to Totnes.

Level 2 cycling starts in Class 7 where in the curriculum the 'Discoverers' of the new world correspond to an inner growth of independence. Riding on a bicycle on the road and taking a certain amount of responsibility (albeit embryonic) is a leitmotiv for class 7. A major aspect of the training has been getting one's act together: bicycle (in good order), helmet and appropriate clothing for the weather. They learn how to start and finish

an on road journey safely as well as left and right turns and various other manoeuvres. It has been quite a strain to ensure safety at all times and it has been an act of trust in other road users but it has also been inspiring to see the children growing in confidence and independence and road awareness.

In Class 8 we cycle regularly to the gym (1.5 miles) and do various rides through the year to consolidate the training thus far and to build fitness. In Classes 9 and 10 we plan to do a level 3 training for those who wish to deepen their skill as well as including cycling to the gym regularly. Class 9 will do extra sessions to prepare to cycle 100 km to their fire and earth main lesson in Brittany. Class 10 also cycle to their surveying main lesson.

Around Class 8 and above the students begin adolescence proper and with the journey into puberty comes a new relation to gravity. This means becoming longer limbed and heavier and taking hold of one's own weight is an important theme in the movement curriculum. This is exemplified by doing somersaults in Class 8 gymnastics. To grasp one's own body at this age is necessary and taking a journey on a bicycle for a useful purpose is a worthwhile way of practising this. With this also comes a greater degree of independent decision making. Having trained the students thus far we give them opportunities to make sensible and safe decisions on the road.

Our hope is that our work will help the students to develop lifelong skills, which they can use in the future. Our thanks go out to everyone who has supported cycling at our school!!!

If you have any questions please contact us at the school (01803-897377, enquiries@steiner-south-devon.org)

TOM TOWEY, NATASCHA JEFFRIES-TOLFSODORF AND ANDREW HOLDSTOCK
SOUTH DEVON STEINER SCHOOL



Picture: Cycling at South Devon Steiner School

LANDS END TO JOHN O'GROATS – Bike ride in aid of Wynstones' New Hall and Macmillan Cancer Care

Huge congratulations to the Lands End to John O'Groats cyclists and their support team who, through sheer grit and determination, completed their epic 1000 miles in 10 days bike ride.

They went through months of specialist training to take part in a ride of this nature and the school community congratulates them on this extreme test of physical and mental ability to raise money for the New Hall and MacMillan.

Special mention must go to Kris McGowan for his dedication and resolve in organising this ride, and a big thank you to those people from outside the school who gave their time to provide support.

Well done!

KEN POWER
WYNSTONES SCHOOL

