

In recent years the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF) has produced a termly newsletter for distribution to schools, parents and friends of the education. This year we have changed our approach in order both to save money and to acknowledge the ways in which news is now shared. Since January we have been producing a monthly 'Update' that is circulated to schools via administrators and Fellowship reps. The Update is for internal use and is to keep trustees, teachers and staff informed of issues that are being addressed by SWSF in between the cycle of Fellowship Council (trustee) meetings. In addition we update the website's news section more frequently and in response to breaking news. We also have a facebook page and Twitter account on which regular posts keep people informed of what is happening in the world of Steiner education. This newsletter is additional to all of the above and as such may need to be forgiven a certain amount of repetition. We hope that schools will circulate it to parents, either electronically, or by printing it as required, and that the reader will gain a sense for the contribution we are attempting to make to the incredibly vibrant, challenging and shifting educational landscape we are all part of.

## New Schools and New Opportunities:

For the first time in several years we are able to announce the opening of new schools:

### Calder Valley (Hebden Bridge).

For over ten years the Pennine town of Hebden Bridge in the Calder Valley has been home to a Steiner Waldorf kindergarten. Two-and-a-half years ago the move to a beautiful old Sunday School in the picturesque village of Cragg Vale brought the dream of growing into a school much closer. This September the transition was complete as the kindergarten became the Calder Valley Steiner School and the first class one was launched.



### Cardiff

The Cardiff Steiner Early Years Centre will open a school in September with a combined Class 1/2 (for 6 to 8 years) and a combined Class 3/4 (for 8 to 10). The school took an innovative approach towards recruiting new teachers: they asked six former Kindergarten and mainstream children to become a class for two days. They served as the 'sample class' as teacher candidates were observed and interviewed.

### Mulberry Tree

The Mulberry Tree Early Years Group also saw the need to provide schooling for children beyond kindergarten. A modest and revolutionary start has been made by hosting the new class one in a former Fire Services Command vehicle (a cross between a panel van and a bus). In February the Mulberry Tree project was granted Independent School Status by the DfE and can probably claim to be the only Steiner school in the world to have its home in what is officially designated as a fire engine!

**The Steiner Academy Hereford** is in the process of putting in place interim management arrangements for the next school year in anticipation of Trevor Mepham's imminent departure to the Steiner Academy Frome. This arrangement is going to provide an opportunity for some of the existing members of staff to develop the skills and understanding needed to lead and manage a state funded Steiner school.

**The Steiner Academy Frome** is due to open on 5 September 2012. Whilst the permanent site is being refurbished the school will be temporarily accommodated in the very attractive Victorian village school building in Corsley which is 4 miles from Frome. This is a welcome arrangement for both the children and the contractors and will make the refurbishment of the permanent site much easier. Initially the school will open with provision for children from kindergarten to Class 3 and there are still places available, especially in Classes 2 and 3 (more detail about admissions at <http://www.proposedsaf.org.uk/applying-for-a-school-place.php>)



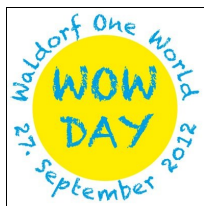
Early this spring we learned that Steiner Academy Free School applications from the projects in **Leeds** and **Exeter** had both cleared the first hurdle and have been invited to interview by the DfE. If they are successful they would be opening new academies in September 2013 which, as double stream entry, would have the opportunity to grow to 650 pupils each. Colleagues from **Hereford**, **Frome** and the initiatives in **Exeter** and **Leeds** have met together in order to help the latter through their interviews and to lay the foundations for future collaboration between Steiner Academies.

Schools in the **Republic of Ireland** have particular and special challenges quite unlike of those of their UK colleagues. Principle among these is that there is no tradition, or recognised legal status for independent schools there, and like Scotland, Wales and the north of Ireland, no equivalent to English Academies. While **Kildare** Steiner School continues to work independently, the two schools in **County Clare** have succeeded in gaining (provisional) registration as National Primary schools. Bringing Waldorf principles and practice into the context of a recently reformed Irish Primary Curriculum is challenging. Schools there are further tested by

training needs imposed by the requirement to appoint teachers with Irish BEd qualifications and the requirement to speak and teach the Irish language. Our Irish colleagues are exploring a variety of approaches, working with the realities of their situation. What emerges is likely to be a distinctive and distinctively Irish version of Waldorf education, something from which schools on this side of the Irish Sea will surely learn a great deal.

Colleagues at the **Hollywood Steiner School** have been working hard at school improvement. In conversation with SWAS they are interested in exploring the possibility of hosting a short conference for Upper School teachers, possible in the autumn term. The focus would be on new approaches to questions of curriculum and qualifications.

**Easter Conference:** Wynstones colleagues should be feeling very pleased with themselves and their efforts on our behalf in organising and hosting a highly successful Easter conference. A succession of inspiring talks, workshops and activities gave added depth to our understanding of breathing whilst the weather, shifting from summer warmth to winter blast within twenty four hours (well done campers!) gave a living example of `breathing` at its deepest. Special thanks are owed to chief hostess Sarah Frazer.



**WOW Day:** Has your school joined yet? Since 1994 Waldorf students from all over Europe have raised about 1,5 million Euro for Waldorf education and other related projects around the world via `Waldorf One World`. In the many countries where Steiner education is not supported by the state, valuable initiatives struggle to survive from day to day, whilst trying to provide an education accessible to children that is in accordance with human dignity. This might mean something as basic as providing them with a warm meal!

This year we had more schools participating in WOW and the results so far are: York raised £3040.60, Elmfield £140, Steiner Academy Hereford £761, Ringwood £287, St Michael £210, Bristol £54.98, Iona £155, South Devon £1428, Michael Hall £568, Botton £238, Michael House €492, Raheen Wood €1443 WOW-Day 2011 has raised €322.290.98 in Europe so far. The administration costs are completely covered by the Friends of Waldorf Education.

The next European WOW-Day campaign will take place on 27th September 2012, visit: [www.freunde-waldorf.de/en](http://www.freunde-waldorf.de/en)

**SIS inspections:** This year will see the completion of the first three year cycle of inspections carried out by School Inspection Services. There has been a very positive response to the style of these inspections, conducted by professional inspectors with a well-qualified Lay-Inspector. SWSF is looking to continue and build on this success. Firstly, we have a potential opportunity to, at last, extend SIS inspections to our non-school, independent, Early Childhood Settings in England; secondly, we are exploring ways in which it might be possible to integrate Waldorf-specific quality care and development alongside the formal aspects of inspection. We will seek to bring you more news as things develop.

**Early Childhood:** The new statutory regulation and guidance for the EYFS was launched in April, and will come into effect in September. There are also new 2 year-old check guidelines, which need to be completed by anyone caring for 2-3 year olds. We continue to discuss the implications of this, and exemptions or modifications to the Learning and Development (L&D) requirements with the DfE, Ofsted and the Schools Inspection Service.

Breaking news about how exemptions will need to be applied for by our schools and early years settings will be circulated shortly. We are not optimistic about being allowed to get group exemptions on behalf of all the schools, but we do expect that UNFUNDED school kindergartens will be able to get complete exemptions from all the L&D requirements and profile. Independent kindergartens, funded schools and Academies (Free Schools) are likely to have to apply individually.

The World Early Childhood Conference took place in Dornach, Switzerland just before Easter, and was attended by 1,200+ colleagues from all over the world including many from the UK. It was culturally rich, with inspiring lectures, workshops, seminars, performances of eurythmy, dance, clowning and music, and very well organised by the International early childhood association **IASWECE** [www.iaswece.org](http://www.iaswece.org) and the Pedagogical Section in the Goetheanum.

It is hoped that a new early years training course based in the north of England will start this September. Jill Taplin and Francesca Meynall have been working around the clock to move this forwards but are still in need of financial support to be able to proceed. Details can be found at [www.neswec.org.uk](http://www.neswec.org.uk) or directly from Jill: [jill@neswec.org.uk](mailto:jill@neswec.org.uk)



#### **Teacher Education:**

**QTS (Qualified Teacher Status):** The pilot cohort of teachers who are acquiring QTS whilst working in our schools will graduate at the end of the summer term and a new cohort is being recruited for a September start. It is not only our teachers who have benefited from this opportunity but also the tutors from Canterbury Christ Church University who have been very impressed and at times creatively challenged by our teachers. Those interested in following this pathway to QTS from September onwards should contact [heather.howe@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:heather.howe@canterbury.ac.uk).

For details of the **Masters in Steiner Education** - and this may be of interest to non-teaching staff and parents as well as teachers - please contact [lynn.revell@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:lynn.revell@canterbury.ac.uk), It is three years, part-time, based on

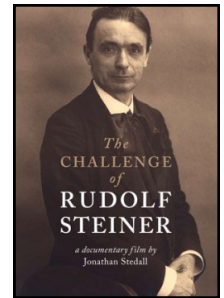
eight weekend residentials (three in years one and two, two in the final year) and priced at £6,885, inclusive of residentials, the first of which will be in March 2103.

Prospective teachers who now visit the SWSF website, and many do, will now find a clearer lay-out and more extensive information as they attempt to see which training course is appropriate to them. The page also acknowledges the initial attempts of the **Association of Steiner Waldorf Teacher Educators (ASWTE)** to pilot new Quality Assurance procedures and to ensure that all training providers are working to agreed benchmarks.

#### Web site, PR and communications.

SWSF now has a [facebook page](#) and a [Twitter account](#). By `liking` and/or `following` you will automatically receive regular updates from SWSF. We have been working with PR colleagues in member schools as they explore the possibilities of social media and it is intended to consolidate a close working together of those involved in PR within our schools.

We have also made extensive changes to the website with the addition of a new section entitled `Does it Work? Alumni and Testimonials` and a small collection of PDF's that can be downloaded and used as posters and leaflets. The site also hosts the full version of both DVD's `What is a Steiner School?` and `The Gift of Education` in addition to an extensive section of the Jonathan Stedall's film `The Challenge of Rudolf Steiner`. [www.rudolfsteinerfilm.com](http://www.rudolfsteinerfilm.com).



**European Waldorf Diploma and ECSWE:** The European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE) has once again been successful in securing Jean Monet funding, a remarkable achievement given the level of competition and rigour involved in accessing EU funding. Out of 29 NGO's that applied, only 9 were successful, an endorsement for the Forest Row staff who worked so hard on the application but also of the truly international credentials of the organisation. For more on ECSWE activities visit: <http://www.steinerwaldorfeurope.org/ecswenews.php>

One consequence of the success is that money is now available to support the travel costs of colleagues who wish to attend the conference in Leuven in Belgium from August 31st to September 2nd. This conference is primarily for teachers who would like to consider piloting units, which have so far been written in mathematics, physics, native language and literature and history for classes 9 through 12. (The latter three subjects were written in German and still need to be translated into English, which should be happening soon). EU regulations will fund a maximum of two teachers attending the conference per school. Germany has a limit of 10 teachers attending from the whole country, the UK does not.

**Europe and the Steiner Waldorf `service mark`:** The recent meeting of ECSWE was held in Madrid and attended by representatives of 22 European countries. In recent months there has been discussion about the service mark attached to Steiner Waldorf education, i.e. the legal right for a school to call itself a Steiner school and the rights of a national association such as SWSF to confer this status. An historic obligation has rested with the German Bund, (or member organisation) and this needs to be reviewed. A proposal for a new approach has been made by the International Forum (previously known as the Hague Circle) and delegates had the opportunity to respond. The need for more clarity is highlighted by the emergence of Steiner schools in countries such as China where there is no national association to confer or withhold the service mark. The conversation will be continued at the next ECSWE meeting, to be held in the Ukraine. The meeting will also be an opportunity for colleagues to share best practice in the challenging area of assessment.

#### In Brief:

- A reminder that **SWSF publications** are now available directly via the web site and the link to **Floris Books**. <http://www.florisbooks.co.uk/subjects/swsf>.
- **New book: *Understanding the Steiner Waldorf Approach*** Janni Nicol and Jill Taplin. Routledge. (2012)
- **SWAS** is planning a working day on the theme of holistic assessment in the week of 16th July (after the end of term). For details: [swas@steinerwaldorf.org](mailto:swas@steinerwaldorf.org)
- For regular news updates, video clips and topical items, visit and `like` the **SWSF Facebook page** and follow us on Twitter.
- **Finance:** We are very grateful to the Friends of the Steiner Academy Hereford for a donation of £2,500 for the travel fund and to the Anthroposophical Society of Great Britain for the donation of £2,000 for the development of publicity materials. Please be aware that Fellowship activities rely to a considerable extent on gift money and that any ideas you may have to help with fundraising would be gratefully received. Email: [admin@steinerwaldorf.org](mailto:admin@steinerwaldorf.org).



**Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship**  
Registered Office: 11 Church Street, Stourbridge DY8 1LT  
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