SWSF Newsletter - Summer 2012

This is our second newsletter of the year and is for distribution to parents and friends of the education. We hope that it reaches you via your school's busy admin. staff at this very hectic time of year and that it will give you a brief snapshot of some of the things that are happening in and around our member schools.

News from Meadow School, Bruton:

In another year of shifts and changes, with two new schools opening and the Frome Academy preparing for its September start it is appropriate to begin by thanking all those colleagues, parents and children who have contributed in their different ways to the life of the Bruton school.

We received this notification from Bruton's SWSF rep.:

"The decision was taken last month that Meadow Steiner School, Bruton, Somerset will close at the end of this term. Meadow has been open as an Early Years centre since 1993 and as a Lower School (up to Class V/VI) since 1997 and many children have experienced their first years of Steiner education in this small, family-centred school. Many of the children have secured places at the new Steiner Academy Frome, due to open in September. Others have found their way to local primary and secondary schools, whilst several have "graduated" to the South Devon Steiner School over the years. Some staff have found new posts at Steiner Academy Frome, Bristol Steiner School and the London Kindergarten training course, among others. These children and staff carry with them the striving for the highest (often in the face of adversity and seemingly insurmountable odds) that has characterised Meadow over the last two decades. It is hoped that a parent and child group or similar will emerge in the locality in the future, but that is uncertain at present.

The decision to close Meadow was taken with great regret, but in joy and thankfulness for all that has been achieved over the last two decades. Steiner Academy Frome, with the active support of parents, staff and trustees from Meadow, takes up the torch for the future of Steiner education in Somerset, which has been nurtured until now at Meadow."

Early Childhood:

The Nutbrown review into workforce qualifications has just been published, and we were commended by Cathy Nutbrown on the fact that we had accredited training courses which exceeded the minimum requirements for a level 3 (and higher for managers). Her recommendations, including high quality child initiated play, child development and observation and assessment from birth to seven are well met within our training. The review is a laudable attempt to raise the status of early years practitioners (to QTS level) and although it is unlikely that in these austere times that the government will be able to afford to fund training, we hope that they will take up the recommendations. Our present Steiner Waldorf qualifications are fully recognised and we await with interest the government's response to the review.

We have been having further discussions on exemptions, after the consultation, which many kindergartens responded, and we hope that the outcome will be favourable for our schools, practitioners and Steiner practice. We will be holding a conference on the 15th September on the new EYFS statutory regulations, and will be addressed by SIS and Ofsted EY inspectorate and by someone from the DfE.

Jill Taplin has received a small but generous grant which will enable preparation for the new early years training course in the north of England (NESWEC) to take place. More funding is sought in order to support the development of this course. For further information please contact jill@neswec.org.uk

News from Schools:

Congratulations to **St. Michael** school on the acquisition of beautiful new premises in the Feltham area of London, just west of Richmond and Teddington and adjacent to the beautiful Hanworth Park. The school will be relocating during the summer in preparation for a September start in its new home.

North of the border the **Moray** school is also preparing for significant changes. The school has agreed to sell part of its grounds to facilitate the launch of the Moray Acorn School. The plan for the new upper school is in its infancy but aims to open its doors in September 2013.

The **Norwich** school is also preparing to launch an upper school initiative and is one of a number of schools looking to provide an exam-free environment and developing alternative ways of assessing their students' progress. (See EWD, below).

Academies:

Leeds and Exeter Free School proposals teams are waiting to hear if their recent interviews with DfE convinced the Department that each proposer team has the capacity to proceed to a September 2013 opening. The news will be announced shortly.

The Steiner Academy Frome has signed its Funding Agreement and a full complement of teaching staff have been successfully appointed. The admissions process has been completed and the school is due to open at the beginning of September with all classes full up to and including Class 3. The school will operate from temporary accommodation in a village school building outside Frome, where the school will remain until the site in Frome is refurbished and ready. Our very best wishes go to this new venture that is set to grow to become a school to class 10 for 624 pupils.

The Steiner Academy Hereford has a new interim leadership team in readiness for the Principal moving on to lead the Frome Academy in September. The school is looking very beautiful and with some justification was one of the nominees for the RIBA annual award. The school has also received national recognition for the proportion of top grades in GCSE in 2011. It now qualifies as one of the top 10% of non-selective schools in England and is one of a select group of 5 sponsored academies that appear on the list of the country's leading schools in terms of their A*- A grades including English and Maths. Sue Williamson, the Chief Executive of the Specialist Schools and Academy Trust said: "the school should be congratulated for its stunning achievement in securing some of the best GCSE results in the country". This is testimony to the strength of the non-test driven Steiner approach.

The European Waldorf Diploma (EWD):

The European Waldorf Diploma is an international project that aims to create a fully accredited and recognised qualification for Waldorf schools. The EWD has been gradually building momentum over the past three years and will start on a pilot phase from September 2012. The aim with the pilot is to test some of the basic elements of the qualification and to address the question of appropriate assessment methods: How can we assess learning in a way that supports a student and teacher centred pedagogical approach while at the same time meeting the requirements of external recognition? As well as being an accredited qualification, the EWD aims to provide a potential focus point for re-imagining and transforming Waldorf upper school education to meet the emerging needs of the present and the future.

The EWD pilot will start with an international seminar that will take place from the 31st August to the 2nd September in Leuven, Belgium. Although the main focus will be on preparing schools for the pilot, it will also be an opportunity for anyone interested to find out more and potentially get involved. Participating organisations in this project so far include ECSWE, SWSF, the Pedagogical Section, Crossfields Institute and a number of international Waldorf schools. If you would like to attend the Leuven conference, please contact Margareta Van Raemdonck at: (margareta.van.raemdonck@mareland.net) For more information on the EWD contact Detlef Hardorp (dh@waldorf.net) or Fergus Anderson (fergus@crossfieldsinstitute.com)

Overseas:

At the invitation of Waldorf colleagues and the Ministry of Education of Peru Christopher Clouder visited Lima at the beginning of June. He gave a talk and had conversations with the Waldorf Kindergarten teachers in the city, spoke to the teachers of the three Waldorf schools at the premises of the Anthroposophical society, gave advice to the initiative group of a new pioneering school, held the keynote talk and conclusion at a public conference in Colegio Waldorf Lima, was interviewed for the most prestigious newspaper, gave a lecture to the assembled primary school head teachers of the metropolitan area (population 10 million) and another to the officials in the Ministry who are responsible for ECEC and primary education of the country. For more information on Christopher's visit to Peru and his activities on behalf of the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education, visit: http://www.ecswe.org/index.php

WOW Day. Don't leave it too late...The next European WOW-Day campaign will take place on 27th September 2012.

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! Visit: www.freunde-waldorf.de/en/wow-day.html