The Lower School (Ages 6 - 14)

Moving from kindergarten or early years to `big school`, is a cause of great excitement and expectation for all children and their parents. It can also be a time of anxiety and needs real sensitivity and an attention to detail. In common with many school systems around the world our children begin formal school in their seventh year when they enter Class 1 (year two). Here they meet their Class Teacher for the first time, ideally someone who will stay with them for the next eight years.

Young children learn best when they are active, either outwardly, through their limbs, their games and their play; or inwardly, through imagination, wonder and anticipation. In the Lower School the curriculum and the method of delivery are designed with this in mind. The pictorial and the imaginative are recognised as central to the teaching of all subjects, as are the importance of movement and activity. Abstract and conceptual thinking arise more naturally when children have had this opportunity to learn in a manner that works with their imaginative and creative tendencies.

At the heart of the school day is the Main Lesson, a daily block period of approximately two hours of the same subject delivered for a period of 3 - 4 weeks. This real immersion in one or other of the core subjects of English, Maths, History, Geography and Science works with the child's natural tendency to explore deeply. During the rest of the school day lessons include further English and Maths, in addition to eurythmy (a form of movement which is unique to Steiner schools), modern languages, games, painting, drawing, land work, woodwork, clay modelling, handwork and music. Additionally music and drama play an important part in school life: classes regularly perform plays, whilst singing and recorder-playing form an integral part of the Main Lesson in the younger classes, often leading to the formation of class orchestras and school choirs.

Class One (Year Two, age 6-7)

In Class One time is spent encouraging good habits of classroom life and work, fostering a sense of respect for others, reverence for nature and learning to connect with and care for the environment. Writing is introduced using pictures, rhymes and stories, and practised with form drawing and movement. Reading begins with the children's own written work and familiar songs and poems. Listening and speaking skills are also practised, with nature stories and fairy tales from around the world. Number work is begun, again with pictures, rhymes and stories and the four processes are introduced. A start is made on learning times tables by heart.

Class Two (Year Three, age 7-8)

Stories from legends and fables provide the inspiration for writing, speaking and reading. Cursive writing and composition are introduced. Reading skills continue to develop, working with word families, vowels and diphthongs, moving from familiar to new texts. Nature stories help the children to understand natural cycles, reinforced by walks and exploration of the outdoor environment. Maths work builds with mental practice and longer exercises, moving on to larger numbers, number bonds, odd and even numbers, columns and carrying-over and simple geometrical form drawing.

Class Three (Year Four, age 8-9)

The focus in the Main Lessons is on practical activities, including farming, gardening and building, often with a building project in the school grounds and field trips to meet people at work. The children's writing now allows them to explore nouns, verbs, adjectives and punctuation as they move on to descriptive and creative tasks. In maths, practice of all 12 tables continues; long multiplication and long division are introduced, as is working with money, and various forms of measurement - linear, liquids, solids and time.

Class Four (Year Five, age 9-10)

The Main Lessons provide opportunities for more independent work and individual projects, and include local geography, local history, (beginning with the school grounds and leading on to trips exploring the area); the Norse myths and an introduction to biology where the form and functions of humans and animals are introduced. In English, grammar work covers the tenses and parts of speech. In maths, fractions are introduced, using all four processes; measurement and area work are continued and in form drawing Celtic knot work is explored.
Class Five (Year Six, age 10-11)
Main Lessons include: early civilisations of India, Persia, Babylonia and Egypt, moving on to classical ancient Greek history (the year culminates in a trip to the national Steiner school Olympic Games and the games lessons include preparation for this); the plant kingdom, and Geography, which expands from the locality of the school to take in the whole of the British Isles. English work develops with direct speech, converting from active to passive voice, punctuation. In Maths, compass geometry is introduced, as is the decimal system.

Class Six (Year Seven, age 11-12)
Now the curriculum starts to call on pupils' growing deductive, logical, analytical and critical faculties. Main Lessons include Physics, where pupils are introduced to optics, sound and thermodynamics; Geology; History, focusing on the Roman Empire, with its practical, organised and legislative aspects, and Roman Britain, often leading to a field trip to Hadrian's Wall or the city of Bath, followed by the rise of Christianity, Saxon and Danish invasions of Britain and William the Conqueror. Geography now extends to European physical and human geography. In English lessons, the conditional is taught, and there are regular dictations and comprehension exercises, whilst science and history blocks introduce report writing. In maths, percentages, profit and loss, simple interest and proportion and ratio are covered; geometry lessons introduce the use of the protractor.

Class Seven (Year Eight, age 12-13)
The main curriculum themes mirror the pupils' exploration of the outer world and their inner emotional turmoil. Main Lessons include an exploration of inner feelings through wish, wonder and surprise; in history they explore the Middle Ages and the transition from feudalism to the Renaissance, and the Age of Discovery with the great voyages of the 15th to the 17th centuries. In the Astronomy Main Lesson they study the night skies, linked with the history of the great voyages of discovery; Geography continues this by moving to World Geography, including a detailed study of a single continent and looking at the cultural, material and economic conditions of human societies. Science continues with mechanics and inorganic chemistry and combustion. Human biology emphasises health and hygiene and examines our breathing, circulation and digestion and also sex education, this in the context of human relationships and natural cycles and rhythms. In English the students write business letters and compositions on many different subjects, and revise the grammatical forms of direct and indirect speech. They often study a work of fiction together. In maths they are introduced to graphs and algebra, whilst continuing to build on their geometry skills.

Class Eight (Year Nine, age 13-14)
In this final year with the class teacher it is not unusual for each pupil to work independently on a substantial project of their own choosing. There will also be a major drama production, often Shakespeare, to mark the end of their time in the Lower School. Physics covers magnetism, electricity, and electromagnetism. Organic Chemistry studies substances which build up the human body whilst Biology examines proportion in the human body, the skeleton, muscles and the human eye and ear. Meteorology is introduced with an overview of global weather systems and the study of cloud formations, rain and wind. History Main Lessons cover the major trends in the development of Western culture from the 17th Century to the present, exploring revolution, including the English Reformation and Civil War and the revolutions in America, France and Russia. Biographies of inventors, industrialists and social reformers are an on-going feature in these lessons. English lessons continue with sentence analysis, literature study, creative writing and narrative and descriptive prose. Maths moves on to more complex arithmetic using roots and powers and compound interest. The five basic Platonic solids are constructed and their surface areas and volumes calculated, whilst algebra continues with the theory of equations, introducing more variables. The young students are now ready to say farewell to their class teacher and the lower school and to meet the expertise and rigour that are the foundations of the secondary or upper school.

Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship
Registered Office: 11 Church Street, Stourbridge DY8 1LT
Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Ltd. Registered in England No 519230 Registered Charity No 295104
www.steinerwaldorf.org