

Curriculum Policy

Partial revision June 2019

Introduction

London Steiner School follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, as outlined in the publication edited by Avison & Rawson: *The Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum* and London Steiner School's *Curriculum Framework*. We require all teachers to use these texts as a standard reference text for lesson planning. A new tailor-made curriculum is currently being authored which will describe the Curriculum in more detail.

The Steiner-Waldorf curriculum puts a priority on the relationship of the learning material to the human being, subjects being purposely set in inter-disciplinary contexts wherever possible. In addition, subject matter is taught through a phenomenological or experiential methodology – that is, from observation of, and personal involvement with, phenomena leading to concept (inductive), rather than from presentation or description of the concept to confirmation of examples of that concept (deductive). This educational approach, whilst generally more time-consuming for teachers, is also a great source of inspiration for them in working to facilitate the emergence of healthy young humans who are conscious of their own uniqueness, their own skills and abilities and who have a healthy orientation to the world that they are moving into.

London Steiner School operates a two-year age group combined class system and has used this curriculum policy to:

- Outline our understanding and experience of child development in combined classes through the different ages; and
- Describe how we work with child development through use of the curriculum.

General Principles of the Education Offered

Kindergarten

In the Steiner Early Years approach, we provide time and space for the natural, unforced development of key skills as a basis for literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional competence; and a warm and secure learning environment is created where the qualities of childhood are nurtured.

Children enter the kindergarten between the ages of approximately 3½- 6½ years. The Kindergarten use the EYFS and the Steiner-Waldorf Curriculum Framework.

Lower School

Once children join Lower school they have a class teacher who will generally stay with them right through to the end of class 7/8. The first part of each day is spent in 'main lesson', weaving together physical, rhythmic, musical, practical and artistic activities with oral and written work. Main lessons are taught in three-week subject blocks around a curriculum topic, such as literacy, numeracy, geography or history.

Lower school pupils also have subject lessons: French and German (taught initially through games, songs and poems), music, drama, art, painting, handwork, modelling (with clay or beeswax), or form drawing, and later gardening, woodwork, games, religion and science.

Child Development & the Curriculum through the School

Kindergarten 3 -5 year olds

We also follow the **Early Years Foundation Stage Framework** delivering the learning and development requirements for our 3-5 year olds through our Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Curriculum. We deliver the 7 areas of learning and development in order that children may attain all their early learning goals (ELGs). We have been granted exemptions and modifications in some areas of the educational programs and the assessment arrangements, in order to preserve the integrity of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum and practice. (SEE SEPARATE LIST OF EXEMPTIONS AND MODIFICATIONS).

Kindergarten 5 -6 year olds

During their final year in kindergarten the 5 and 6 year olds start to have more responsibility and each works on longer handwork projects in preparation for class one. By the time they are 5 they are attending five mornings a week and on Fridays activities include more challenging activities such as movement games and skipping.

The curriculum for the 5 and 6 year olds in kindergarten is differentiated, with planned, structured activities designed to continue to support their development and to extend their learning and skills, taking into account their individual needs and interests (including those with an EHCP or who are identified as having SEN).

We work with physical co-ordination and integration, social and emotional relationships, imagination and what ifs (scientific enquiry) and creativity.

Tasks and focus are extended, independence, confidence and resilience continues to be developed as the children become physically aware and grounded, extend their own learning through exploration and discovery, become more articulate and self-regulating, empathetic and resilient.

As they reach this age their play changes and becomes more language based. This is taken into account in planning and is supported with appropriate activities and stories.

Transition to class 1 demands certain skills and readiness for a curriculum of formal learning. In order to ascertain the readiness of a child we assess maturity of movement, speech, drawing skills, social and emotional development, physical health and development. We consider what a child needs to be able to do in order to fully access the curriculum in class 1.

We use the class one readiness checklist throughout the year to assess school readiness (see separate document), assess physical maturity through movement games, and provide a more challenging range of project work suitable for the 5 and 6 year old child throughout their final year. We also increasingly work on letter/word recognition and numbers.

Class 1

Building on the good habits inherited from kindergarten the class 1 curriculum forms a framework for the children to find their place within lower school, working with their new teacher and their peers, preparing to share a new journey of learning, and paving the way for combining class one and two the following year.

Learning continues to be developed with a light touch, through rhythmic and visual games and activities.

Class 1 content is based on fairytales and nature stories, which are rich in content and feed the imagination and feeling life of the young child.

Main lesson blocks of numeracy and literacy, which run through the whole of the first year, are taught in alternation with one another, allowing the child to 'sleep' on what they have learnt before coming back to continue to deepen their learning. Other subjects such as art and handwork, are taught mainly by the class teacher at this stage, but the class will also have the experience of one or two other teachers for specialist subjects such as languages.

Summary of typical themes for Class 1 main lesson blocks: Form drawing, numeracy (four processes), literacy (nature, fairy stories)

Class 1/2

The breathing rhythm of the main lesson (which commences in class 1) supports the continuing development of good habits, gross and fine motor skills plus practical skills such as how to hold a pencil. Life skills and social skills are enhanced through fables and saint stories.

During the autumn term the teacher revisits the class 1 curriculum, bringing it for the first time to the younger children while at the same time ensuring that the older children, through recall, are deepening and consolidating their learning and skills as well as introducing new stories and activities.

For example, in a literacy main lesson, the younger children would work on an alphabet book containing capital letters while the older children would now focus on lower case letters. In a numeracy main lesson, the older children might teach the younger ones a game such as clock patience, and in doing so consolidate their own skills, as well as developing an increased sense of responsibility.

The class 2 curriculum is started in the spring term. Class 1 content continues to be blended with the class 2 curriculum. In this term the fables of the class 2 curriculum begin to replace the fairytales of the class 1 and kindergarten curriculums. Class 1 content e.g. learning new letters, continues to be taught to the younger children through stories, but after Christmas, using fables to do so rather than fairytales.

This acceleration of the curriculum for a combined class however has already been supported by the summer term curriculum within kindergarten which prepares the younger group through the telling of additional fairytales. As a result, the class 1 content continues to be delivered alongside whole group progression.

The class 1/2 teacher continues the work of the kindergarten teacher by introducing concepts through pictures and stories in order to develop an imaginative connection to the content. Children also continue to learn the quality of numbers through counting games and activities. This provides a solid foundation on which to build deeper numeracy skills. Through this approach to literacy and numeracy the class 1/2 children will continue to develop an enthusiasm and love for learning as well as ensuring that academic learning goals are well established.

Summary of typical themes for Class 1/2 main lesson blocks: Form drawing, numeracy (maths games, four processes), literacy (Russian fairy stories, fables and saint stories) and nature stories.

Class 2/3

Class 2/3 starts the year with the fables and saint stories, and ends with the authority of the 10 commandments and various tales from the Old Testament, particularly Genesis. As well as providing rich content for literacy work, the curriculum supports the developing child. At the beginning of the year the children's inner understanding of right and wrong is supported through the moral content of fables and saint stories. Introduction in the Spring term of Old Testament stories, provides a contrasting richness of content with strong and fixed moral laws, such as the 10 commandments, as by the end of class 2/3, children also have the feeling for external standards which relate to moral laws.

Class 2/3 children have more capacity for larger quantities and longer periods of work. Children of this age are developing an emergent strong memory which teachers develop and work with by providing longer stories, long poems to memorise, stories with more challenging moral content, consciously thought through rhythmic movement and regular practices of the 4 processes of numeracy.

Summary of typical themes for Class 2/3 main lesson blocks: Alternating numeracy (four processes, complex sums, long division and multiplication) and literacy, with the themes of time, farming, measurement, old testament, building, trades & occupations.

Class 3/4

The curriculum moves from the external power of the one God of the Old Testament, through the earthly authorities of the Prophet and the King, right through to the competing gods of Norse mythology. This movement within the curriculum entails moving away from one God to many gods, from the certainty of what is right and wrong exemplified in the god of the Old Testament towards the questioning of authority that is present in Norse myth. This conflict and questioning of authority supports the inner development of the child, who is at this stage starting, perhaps for the first time, to question the authority of those around him/her. Working through the rich, vibrant and opulent content of curriculum allows for a multi-faceted look at things, with the underlying principle being that there are many different ways to look at the world.

In numeracy, with the introduction of fractions, there is a continuation of the theme of breaking apart the whole into parts (like the one God to many gods).

Within the curriculum there is order to balance disorder; form drawing is no longer free, but becomes very rule-based and rigorous, based on Celtic knotwork and interweave.

Wider perspectives are introduced through a local Geography main lesson block, encouraging the children to look at the world beyond school and the home environment. Wider perspective is also gained through the Man & Animal main lesson block, where by studying the archetypal characteristics of animals, the students can look to see how they correspond to different aspects of the human being, but also as to how they are different and separate as well.

Summary of typical themes for Class 3/4 main lesson blocks: Old testament, Man & Animal, local geography, building, Norse myths, maths (fractions)

Class 4/5

Class 4/5 is, in many ways, the movement toward the heart of childhood and harmony.

In autumn term the class 4 curriculum continues with Norse myths, ending with the Twilight of the gods at the final battle of Ragnarok while class 5 in the spring term inaugurates a new beginning with the voyage of Manu, the sinking of Atlantis and the beginning of the study of Indian mythology.

Class 5 is the middle of childhood, with a strong emphasis on beauty and transformation. Children study the world around them in many different ways. Literacy moves from the mythological stories of muddy, murky trickster type characters such as Loki in Norse myth, through to Greek mythology and the celebration of the beauty of humanity through a re-enactment of the original Greek Olympics.

Botany starts with studies of the mushroom and fungi in the autumn, through to studies of the flower in the summer. Metamorphosis of the caterpillar to the cocoon to the butterfly are all studied in class 4/5. The common theme of the year is transformation and beauty, harmony and the Olympic ideal.

Summary of typical themes for Class 4/5 main lesson blocks: Botany, Norse myths, Geometry, numeracy, Indian mythology, UK geography, Persia, Greek mythology

CLASS 5/6

In class 5/6, children are starting to move into puberty, with its associated loss of balance and harmony. This move into puberty is mirrored in the curriculum through the progression from mythology to Roman history via Alexander the Great and the romance and emotional quality of Ovid's tales of metamorphosis. With the onset of puberty, children experience a metamorphosis of their inner world, with forces emerging within that are not easy for them to understand.

There is a hardening of the body through the development of muscles and a loss of naivety which starts to occur. The emergent challenge to authority of this age group is matched with the regimentation of the Romans. The children experience the Romans' determination to conquer the world, but they learn this is only possible through laws, discipline and by following rules. Debating is introduced in class 5/6 to allow the children to present and defend particular views, thus helping them find forms for their own growing opinions and to help make sense of their world.

In maths, the children make a study of economics in a block on business maths, showing how another kind of order has been brought to the world.

The botany studies in the class 5 curriculum is botany and the analysis of the delicacy of the flower, give way in class 6 to studies of geology, and the hard material matter which makes up the earth.

In games lessons, physical challenges are introduced which require the children to start using their muscles to move their heavier bodies; timed runs are also introduced for the first time; both activities help to bring inner discipline.

Summary of typical themes for Class 5/6 main lesson blocks: Botany, Norse myths, Astronomy, numeracy (percentages, economics, geometric drawings), Indian mythology, UK geography, Persia, Greek mythology

Class 6/7

In class 6 the curriculum moves from the Roman Empire, built on the foundation of strong armies and structures, towards the study of its fall, due in part to the rising of a new movement based on love. The tension between these two conflicting gestures sets the tone for the history and themes of the Class 7 curriculum.

This is mirrored socially in that in class 6 pupils want to conquer their social environment by being more powerful than one another, but by class 7 they start realising that they are part of a much bigger world, that they are more than themselves. They move into a place of being more accepting of one another's idiosyncrasies, faults and virtues. There is a drop in the level of social antagonism and there is a brief developmental period where the children get the opportunity to experience a sense of peace.

Pupils start to work with their own independence and display a willingness and curiosity to know more. It is the age of discovery and geography that includes studies of Columbus and other archetypal explorer figures. In English studies, pupils engage in genuinely creative writing for the first time, because they are developing something to say. In art, pupils will now be asked to observe and make comment on works of art. The need to explore and go out into the world is met in the games curriculum by activities such as orienteering.

Summary of typical themes for Class 6/7 main lesson blocks: Roman history, physics (acoustics, optics), numeracy (business maths, algebra & geometry), Fall of Rome, Chemistry (combustion), European and Middle East Geography, History (the Crusades), Botany, Norse myths, Indian, Persian and Greek mythology, UK geography, biology (senses & health) and medieval history.

Class 7/8

The theme of class 7 is the Age of Discovery, moving through the Renaissance period and on to the beginning of Revolutions. The transformation which is occurring in the curriculum matches the transformation taking place in the class.

The majority of pupils are now in adolescence; they see the world differently and their bodies are different. In small bursts, there is a waking of their intellect and as they look on the world in a different way in their changing bodies, there is a change in perspective. They notice the social environment and the cultural influence of the world a lot more than previously. They are less willing to accept the world, but have a belief that they can do something to change the world.

In art classes or as a main lesson block, and linked to the Renaissance, pupils do perspective drawings.

The American Revolution is studied as rich content for how change can be brought about, leading to more independence and a personal sense of responsibility (self governance). Around this time, pupils are asked to complete a class 8 project, their first independent project and the pupils are encouraged to be more self-governing as the teacher steps back more to allow space for pupils to be independent, both socially and in their work. The Class 7/8 curriculum also covers the French Revolution to see the contrast of how a Revolution can also bring about change, but not necessarily the change that was wanted.....

In the games curriculum, this is the time to introduce activities such as solo sailing, whereby pupils learn to take personal responsibility for learning to sail and control it.

Summary of typical themes for Class 7/8 main lesson blocks: Perspective drawing, Platonic solids, Age of Discovery, American & French Revolutions, Physics (electricity), Chemistry (food substances & digestion), Biology (Anatomy), Maths (algebra, Pythagoras Theorem, pi and circles, percentages, ratios).

Class 8

In summary they are:

- Finding their own voice
- Beginning to see how knowledge makes one capable of forming appropriate judgements
- Learning how forming judgements leads to new questions.

To support these developmental and educational needs, teachers create opportunities through the curriculum for observing from contrasting angles and different perspectives. For example in English, different styles e.g. epic, descriptive, lyric, dramatic can be used to create different perspectives and to 'try on' different emotions. Recordings of news, podcasts and real world examples may also be brought.

The history curriculum, with studies of revolutions, usually with emphasis on the Industrial revolution and the wider consequences of it – poverty, pollution and the era of capitalism for example. This leads on to further studies of the Russian revolution, communism and the events that led up to the First World War, all of which provide rich ground for exploring different points of view and perspectives.

Biographical, and geographical study of Captain Cook and the impact European explorers had on indigenous people, allows the students to look at different cultures and different cultural perspectives. Underlying these studies are themes of how to 'be' without dominating, but instead accepting, others.

In geography, a study of the rhythm and order of weather systems, and yet their inherent unpredictability, finds a resonance with the inner chaos of their own emotions.

Geometry in the maths curriculum includes "Patterns in number" which helps the students develop their own insights into geometry and geometrical proofs. Quadratic equations and measurements and calculations of surface and volumes provide good practice in formal, logical thinking.

In Biology, pupils go from learning about the human skeleton, muscular system and sense organs, to looking much further into the shape and function of the bones.

Summary of typical themes for Class 8 main lesson blocks: English (poetry, short story, civil rights movement), textiles, science, drama, maths (pattern in number), history of art, history (French & Industrial revolutions), inventions in physics (steam, calculator, electricity) and photography.