



WELCOME TO OUR AUTUMN 2019 NEWSLETTER

Update from the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship

Dear Colleagues,

Steiner Education in England continues to go through turbulent waters, although we have certainly passed one cataract now with Ofsted having completed its round of the schools, as Ofsted's Amanda Spielman's letter signifies. While many people will have various reactions to this, it is important to appreciate that it concludes a period of uncertainty and whether good or bad, right or wrong, justified or not –to put it simplistically- we now know where we stand.

This can be seen as a new beginning with greater things to come. Certainly, in some countries that have gone through not dissimilar phases, something much stronger has emerged. It is probably important to remind ourselves that, while teachers, schools, school leaders and trustees, the SWSF and anybody who is interested in Steiner Education, navigate the emotional currents and turmoil of this wild-water we are working towards a future where Steiner Education represents an established and well respected stream within the educational landscape.

The Fellowship has engaged with Ofsted and the DFE in recent months through meetings and conversations and we have been able to establish a useful stream of communication, enabling us to maintain exemptions, advise on inspection styles going forward and inform the regulators regarding the content and context of Steiner Education. It is clear that in this context the Fellowship is invaluable as an associative body for Steiner Schools, as the DFE and Ofsted stated that they will not engage with individuals or individual schools. Furthermore, the Fellowship has also been actively engaged with Avanti and the Regional Schools Commissioners in order to ensure that, as far as possible, while the re-brokering of the academies is still underway, the commitment to the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum is maintained.

The Educational Debate and Research

It is probably also important to appreciate that the current educational landscape is based on a 'reductionist model based on positivistic materialism' as so eloquently put in the recent letter by Richard House and Richard Brinton (House and Brinton, 2019).

It is letters like this, that can inspire the desperately needed educational debate; another example was the debate published in the Guardian (2019). However, Steiner Education is, as yet, not part of the overall educational debate in the UK, or national research and

teacher education; a state of affairs we as a body of schools must work to remedy.

It is our belief that in order to make Steiner Education a beacon in the national educational landscape, research, which is UK based, is desperately needed and we are in conversation with academics as well as with potential sources of funding to establish a subsidiary to the SWSF that focusses solely on research into Steiner Education. Fittingly to the current time and situation, a name that has been mentioned for this could be RISE- Research Into Steiner Education. The purpose of this entity would be to collate, conduct and publish research into Steiner Education with a focus on the UK. This is in the context that the last, and really only

significant, piece of research was done in 2005 prior to the establishment of the academies (Woods et al., 2005).

While research is available in other countries through mainstream publishers (e.g. Paschen 2010, Dahlin 2017, Suggate and Reese 2012) this certainly is an omission in the UK that has to be rectified if we want Steiner Education to be grounded and established as a respected reference point in the UK educational landscape.

In a regulatory culture where learning is mainly defined cognitively as a 'change in long-term memory' (Ofsted, 2019, p.5) the conversation has to start at the level of research and practice. Our aim is that Steiner Waldorf Teacher Education will be in, or at least in collaboration with universities; that there are Steiner PGCEs, and that Steiner Education is accessible to most children in most places.

Needless to say, in order to bring an educational stream that is interested in the Spirit of Man into a system which is driven and shaped by positivistic materialism, conflicting points of view and battles cannot be avoided, but one has to be skilled and well equipped to embrace those. The Fellowship is interested to hear from any individual who is engaged in a Higher Education and research context, who is skilled, well equipped and passionate about this kind of education and who would like to join this endeavour.

A New Fellowship

In order to further equip ourselves and the movement for what lies ahead you will be aware that the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship has undergone substantial change.

Over the course of the last year the trustees of the SWSF have been consulting with schools, teachers, school trustees as well as Fellowship employees about the way in which the Fellowship has to change in order to embrace the new landscape and support schools most effectively.

During this process, starting with the report by Trevor Mepham and the Association meeting facilitated by Florian Osswald, we have had many meetings consulting with stakeholders nationally, as well as external experts.

We have come to a structure that we hope can deliver this. This structure has to embrace the changed regulatory landscape that Steiner Education finds itself in as well as working with the finite resources that we have. We have also undergone a financial review, very ably supported by Klaus Bohne from the ASinGB, and have had to look at all aspects and priorities, which also includes new accountants, as well as possibilities for a new office location. We considered employment law and training requirements, safeguarding and HR implications in the changed landscape as well as general and specific feedback on many aspects of the work. One outcome of this 'taking stock' has been that we are re-structuring the present form of the advisory service and looking for new ways to enable the pedagogical work.

The Fellowship is very keen to support the pedagogical work that is needed throughout the movement, as well as for specific schools and we feel that this will be possible in the future through self-employed consultants. Furthermore, the SWSF coordinator will facilitate the coordination and financial support of regional and national working groups and conferences and the identification of regional and national leads for certain areas of the curriculum. Thus we hope that pedagogical and organisational advisors will be able to engage in the continued professional development of all Steiner Waldorf staff in the UK in a future orientated form from now on.

We cannot sufficiently emphasize the invaluable contribution to Steiner Waldorf Education in the UK made over the last decades by Kevin and Jane Avison. We extend our deepest, heartfelt thanks to them both for their dedication and sacrifice. Kevin retired at Easter and Jane will be retiring in September.

Looking forward we are thinking about the next 100 years of Steiner Education and our aim is that Steiner Education becomes a beacon and respected influence in the national educational landscape. As a first step towards this we have acted on the feedback from the school trustees, who have considered the top priorities of the Fellowship to be: firstly the organ that, (amongst many other things), does the interface and lobbying work for all Steiner Schools with the DFE, Ofsted other stakeholders, and secondly, be the organisation which coordinates and supports the collaborative work of schools nationally.

To this end we welcome two new employees to the Executive Group of the Fellowship. Therefore, the employees of the Fellowship from September will be:

Fran Russell - Fellowship Executive Director



Fran played a pivotal role in the development of Greenwich Steiner School from pioneer to established school over 12 years.

A solicitor and senior charity executive by background she brings expertise in

safeguarding, organisational development, governance, HR and the financial management of schools. Passionate about Steiner Waldorf Education she has for many years been a champion for our education, translating external requirements to the Steiner community and explaining Steiner education to the wider world.

Most recently she has been working alongside Ofsted as an inspector at HM Inspectorate of Prisons and brings good understanding of the inspection process. She has significant experience in political lobbying, influencing Government policy, strategic PR and working with the media, including having appeared on Newsnight to defend Steiner Education.

Kath Bransby - Fellowship Coordinator



Kath has been working with the Fellowship since December 2018 and has been instrumental in developing support for Schools and Early Years settings around assessment, paperwork and compliance and articulating the curriculum.

Through workshops, conferences and webinars she has helped colleagues to grow into the changed landscape while maintaining what is important to them and Steiner Education.

Kath was a mainstream teacher and senior leader for 15 years, transforming Early Years settings by introducing aspects of Steiner Education principles and practice, which was not uncontroversial at the time. She also works part-time as a university lecturer in teacher training.

Janni Nicol - SWSF Early Years Executive



Janni will be known to most of you as she has worked for the Fellowship for years, championing Early Childhood Education and placing Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood clearly on the map of educational practice and debate today.

Living and breathing Steiner Education she started as a Waldorf kindergarten teacher in Cape Town, before moving to the UK where, after having her own children, she founded a parent and child group in her home in Cambridge which grew into the present Cambridge Steiner School where she was founder Kindergarten teacher. She was instrumental in starting the Steiner Waldorf Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies, and teaches on training courses.

She is the UK council member for the International Association of Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE) and serves on their board. She has published a number of books and articles on Steiner Waldorf early childhood and edits and publishes KINDLING, Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood.

Sam Greshoff - SWSF Early Years Executive



Prior to her involvement in Steiner Early Childhood Education, Sam made her career in the organisation of Medical Conferences working for the Royal Society of Medicine and Royal College of Physicians.

Shortly after the birth of her first child she became involved in a small, local Steiner Parent and Child group that developed into Greenwich Steiner School. During this time she trained as a Kindergarten teacher and began organising Steiner inspired Parent and Child groups. She led parent and child groups and worked as a teacher in the Canterbury Steiner School Kindergarten as well as holding the role of Parent and Child Group Representative for the Steiner Waldorf Early Years Group (SWEYG).

She is also a tutor on the innovative Holistic Baby and Childcare Course and the NESWEC Kindergarten training.

School Improvement Funding and a Sustainable Financial Model for Schools

We appreciate that many schools are also going through a period of major change and that in order to facilitate this change effectively many schools need more resources.

Having worked with Klaus Bohne from the ASinGB the Fellowship is now looking for a school that would like to undergo a review of their finances and their current financial model which would be led by Klaus and a renowned accountancy firm. We are currently exploring the costs for this and there is the possibility that this might be part funded by the SWSF.

The benefits for the individual schools are clear, it will then be down to the schools to have the will and structure to facilitate this change and before embarking on this test case we would want to be assured that this is the case. The Fellowship would consider part funding this, such that a model is created that can be shared across the movement for all schools. This would most likely involve recommendations regarding the overall sustainability of the school, pupil fees, teacher salaries, financial procedures, staffing structure, running costs and other areas.

Furthermore, we also have the wish to facilitate a major fundraising campaign so that schools can apply for school improvement funds. We are currently looking for interested individuals and organisations who would want to lead on this, be involved or are able to contribute funding.

BECOME A STEINER WALDORF SCHOOLS FELLOWSHIP TRUSTEE

The trustees of the Fellowship are glad to welcome Andrew Scott to their number. The winds of change have been blowing strongly in the last months, and several trustees who have been serving for some years would like to step down at the November AGM.

We hope that there are more courageous individuals who would like to step forward to join the SWSF trustee body and ask you, should you be so inspired, to please contact admin@steinerwaldorf.org. We are

looking for individuals who want to work together with the new team of the Fellowship Executive Group to embrace the challenges ahead that this national associative body faces. The articles of association allow for the trustee body to be comprised of 5 school trustees and 4 independent trustees. We are especially looking for individuals with experience in: Leadership, Human Resources, Law, Property and Finance. We would also warmly welcome a trustee whose remit it is to represent the Education Section.

We do hope that there are some among you who can join our endeavour to navigate the current challenges and steer Steiner Education into the respected position it deserves and one which future generations direly need it to be in. An education that supports the development of the Spirit of Man and that shines strongly in the educational landscape of this country and beyond.

The Trustees of the Fellowship:

Michaela de Winter (chair) - school trustee, Constantin Court (vice chair) - independent trustee, Erika Taylor (treasurer) - school trustee, Nick Brett - school trustee, Paul Georghiades - school trustee, Sinead Wilson-Devane - school trustee, Andrew Scott - independent trustee.

References:

- Dahlin, B. (2017) *Rudolf Steiner: The relevance of Waldorf Education*. Berlin: Springer.
- Guardian (2019) Steiner schools aren't cranky – we develop heart, head and soul. 21 January 2019. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jan/21/steiner-schools-arent-cranky-we-develop-heart-head-and-soul>. [Accessed 27/07/2019]
- House, R. and Brinston, R. (2019) An Open Letter to Amanda Spielman (head of Ofsted), and to Steiner Schools Recently Rated "Inadequate" by Ofsted. 25 of June 2019. Available from: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12PjUvuMoLS9uPyl5ttCBa3fk9TSsE7Bk/view> [Accessed 26/07/2019]
- Spielman (2019) Amanda Spielman writes to Damian Hinds July 2019. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819700/Steiner_schools__Amanda_Spielman_writes_to_Damian_Hinds_July_2019.pdf [Accessed 26/07/2019]
- Ofsted (2019) Education inspection framework: overview of research January 2019, No. 180045. Ofsted. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework-overview-of-research>. [Accessed 26/07/2019]
- Paschen, H. (Ed) (2010) *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Zugaenge zur Waldorfpaedagogik [Educational research approaches to Waldorf education]*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Suggate, S., Reese, E. (eds.) (2012) *Contemporary Debates in Childhood Education*. London and New York: Routledge
- Woods P., Ashley M. and Woods, G. (2005) *Steiner Schools in England*. London: DfES. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228879140_Steiner_schools_in_England/download [Accessed 26/07/2019]

STEINER WALDORF SCHOOLS FELLOWSHIP® Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Ltd ®
Registered in England 519230, Registered Charity 295104

Steiner School is a collective mark of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship
Registered Office: Suite 1, 3rd Floor, Copthall House, 1 New Rd. Stourbridge. DY8 1PH

www.steinerwaldorf.org