

# London Steiner School

## Whole School Festivals, Celebrations and Community Events

*'The purpose of this Part is to ensure that pupils' development in non-academic terms will enable them to play a confident, informed role in society, have a fully developed value system, and be able to interact with other people in a positive way.'* (Para 3.1 Independent School Standards)

Steiner/Waldorf pedagogy puts great emphasis in preparing children for the world in which they will enter as responsible, capable citizens. This statement documents the 'Whole School' approach to **The Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development of pupils (SMSC)** in our school outside the day to day curriculum taught in the classroom. It particularly dovetails into the Introduction to the curriculum policy (part 1) and also the introduction to the PSHE curriculum in the schemes of work.

*A healthy social life is found only when,  
in the mirror of each soul,  
the whole community finds its reflection,  
and when, in the whole community,  
the virtue of each one is living.*

**RUDOLF STEINER**

### Festivals and Celebrations

Fairs, Festivals and Celebrations have an important role in the School year. They encourage a feeling for, and an awareness of, the seasonal rhythm and the importance of community and co-operation.

The School depends on the active involvement of parents in the building and maintenance of the School's healthy social fabric, which is made possible through celebration and working together.

The festivals in our school have their roots in the cycle of the year. The teachers and children celebrate with special assemblies, often inviting parents to participate. They can all be adapted to fit different traditions or cultures and

families from different cultures and denominations are encouraged to share their insights so festivals can be adapted accordingly.

## Michaelmas Term

### Opening Assembly

This takes place on the first day of the Michaelmas Term. New children and teachers are welcomed to the school and each Class teacher tells a story to all but with particular significance for their class. The story will be from part of the curriculum for that new year.

### Class One Assembly

Class one begins a week later than the rest of the school. This gives the teachers a chance to focus on the older children and settle them in before welcoming in the new children from Kindergarten (kg). The Children are told a story in Kg and then led by the Kg teacher into the assembly where they will meet their new teacher and hear a story about the journey they are about to begin. They will also meet their guardians, pupils in class eight who will watch out for them, who will present them with a rose.

### Michaelmas

The first festival of the School year is the festival of **Michaelmas** on the 29th September. It is a festival of 'strong courageous will' for the whole of the School. Kindergarten children each receive a gift from Mother Earth and Class 1 upwards take part in the Michaelmas play of St. Michael and the Dragon. The teachers engage the children in activities of service for the school or community such as:

- One class may make soup for the whole school community on the day of the festival
- Another may make bread for the whole school
- The children often plant bulbs either in the school yard or in a community garden
- There may be a day of gardening or cleaning which a whole class will participate in.

At this time of the year we also find ourselves gathering in the **Harvest**. All children are encouraged to bring donations of food and essential items which are donated to a local charity supporting the homeless. If possible, one of the classes will carry the food to the homeless shelter and meet some of the residents.

### Martinmas

The festival of **Martinmas** is celebrated on 11th November by the younger children (Kindergartens and Classes 1 and 2). The festival culminates with lantern walks to bring light into the darkness of winter. Parents are encouraged to bake flapjacks to bring in. The children receive two each, one for themselves, and one to give to someone else.

### Advent Spiral

The **Advent Spiral** is held close to the first Sunday in Advent. The mood is to cultivate reverence. The children take turns in walking the spiral and lighting their candle from the central candle to place and light the way for us all. The symbolism is the experience of an inner light that needs to shine bright over the winter months in the absence of the sunlight.

### St Nicholas

**St Nicholas** visits the School on 6th December. He encourages the children to behave properly and kindly towards others and can give the children special tasks or activities to perform to aid their development. Traditionally, St. Nicholas's guidance is given to help us prepare ourselves to receive the birth of Jesus.

### **Advent Fair**

The is held in November/December. It is one of the major fund-raising events of the year. All parents and friends are encouraged to work together in a variety of ways to make the day a success and the children will contribute in different ways as part of the whole school community, either making things to sell, helping with a stall or performing.

### **Carol Singing**

From Mid-November onwards the whole School meets each morning to sing Carols. This culminates in carol singing in a public place during December and also, where possible in a home for the elderly. Some children may also perform at other events.

### **End of Michaelmas term**

At the end of term there is a celebration for the children. This can be a story and Carols around the tree, or some years, the teachers and friends will perform the **Oberufer Shepherds' Play** as a gift to the children. The children themselves will perform in the **Festival of Work** (see below)

## **Spring Term**

### **Three Kings Day**

The first assembly of the spring term will be on the theme of the three Kings. The children will be told a story that encapsulate the essence of this day, about the gift and responsibility of wisdom.

### **St. Brigit's Day**

This is the first spring festival, on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> February also known as Imbolc in the Celtic cycle of the year, or in the Christian calendar, Candlemas. In the U.S. it is known as Groundhog Day. It celebrates the tentative return of the light and new growth. The children will be told a story in a school assembly that looks forward to the spring and the returning light.

### **Pancake day**

Usually one class in the school elects to make pancakes for the whole school.

### **End of Spring Term**

At **Easter** the children participate in a treasure hunt, involving clues to solve, set by their teacher. The clues lead to the place where Easter eggs are hidden. At the end of the Spring term the children present a **Festival of Work** (see below)

## **Summer Term**

### **May Day/Beltane**

In **May** we celebrate the beginning of summer with folk dancing or maypole dancing and flower crowns. The children spend time learning traditional folk dances and learning to dance together. If the weather is good, this is held outside at a local park and parents are invited to watch and then dance and bring a shared picnic.

## Whitsun

**Whitsun** is celebrated as a festival of community, tolerance and the gift of inspiration (in the Christian tradition, from the Holy Spirit.) Everyone is asked to wear white on the day of the festival and an assembly is held, with parents of all nationalities invited to read a passage of the Bible in their native tongue.

## St. John's

**St. John's (24<sup>th</sup> June)** is celebrated when the sun is at its height. It takes place at the south London Scout Centre in Dulwich woods. All parents are invited, and everyone is encouraged to wear red or orange. There is a story, singing and the lighting of a bonfire with the symbolic burning of unwanted thoughts and habits, and the focusing on our good intentions for the future. It is a day of joyful celebration shared picnics and community.

## Summer Fair

The **Summer Fair** is held in June or July. Like the advent fair it is a major fund-raising event where everyone is expected to be involved in making the day a great success and enjoyable for all.

## End of the summer term

On the penultimate day of the term is the final festival of work (see below) for the year. At this festival all the children perform however there is a special emphasis on saying goodbye to class eight.

On the last day of the academic year, the children enjoy a **Sports Day** to which all families are invited; this is followed by a shared picnic.

A final exhibition of children's bookwork, craft work and art work is displayed in the classrooms in the summer time after Sports Day.

## Festival of Work

At the end of each term the children perform poetry, plays, songs and eurythmy in a celebration of all they have worked on throughout the term. Parents are invited and strongly encouraged to attend. The festival is a two-hour performance.

## Eurythmy Festival

Each Spring term, the older children perform eurythmy at a national eurythmy festival at Steiner House in Baker Street.

## Regular trips

We believe class trips are a crucial aspect of children's education. They strengthen the class community, develop independence, and enable interaction with the world out-side the school gates in a formal context. All classes go on a variety of trips (please see schemes of work for further information) however the following can be seen as rites of passage, looked forward to, by all children in the school.

### Class 3 trip to a farm

Every class 3 will visit a farm and experience and partake of the work done. Depending on the class and teacher, some teachers will organise overnight trips others will do day trips.

### Class 5 Olympics

This takes place in Sussex at Michael Hall Steiner School. It is a three-day event for class fives from all over the UK and some international schools as well. Parents are invited to watch on the final day.

### **Class 6 Hadrian's Wall**

Ever class 6 takes a 5-9-day trip to Hadrian's Wall

### **Middle School Sports Day**

This is a yearly event for all middle school (classes 6,7,8) pupils in London.

### **Class 8 trip**

This is a final trip of 5-9 days, usually abroad, with the class teacher. There is often an adventurous aspect and a cultural aspect. The pupils themselves will raise a significant contribution for this trip. (see cafes below)

### **Community Cafés**

Cafes and shared eating are an important aspect of our community and a good way to raise money to subsidise school trips.

#### **The Class Cafés**

These are particularly for class 8 to raise money for their trip and the pupils themselves are expected to help bake and prepare food at home and also run the café, setting up, serving, collecting money and clearing away. The Halloween Café is often a favourite!

Younger class communities also have intermittent cafes to raise funds for class trips.

#### **The McMillan Café**

In the Spring Term, the parents and children bake cakes to bring in to school. The yard is decorated and parents and friends are invited to come and buy cakes for McMillan Cancer Research. Children, accompanied by teachers will take the cakes out into local community businesses to raise as much money as possible for the charity.