

# LSS Early Years Curriculum 2020

Within London Steiner School's Early Years department, we strive to create a warm, safe and caring environment where varied and nourishing opportunities are created for self-directed learning where the independence of physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cognitive development can take place for each individual child that enters into our care.

## Core Steiner-Waldorf Early Childhood principles

The kindergarten experience embodies the principles which underpin Steiner-Waldorf Education in general.

These principles are:

- To provide an experience based on the understanding of the child's developmental needs.
- To acknowledge children as having physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual needs.
- To remain aware of the long term as well as the immediate effect of the educating process.
- To protect the child's right to a healthy and appropriate childhood.
- To work with the child's natural inclination to be active.
- To use imitation and example as educational approaches.
- To support the child's wellbeing and his/her learning experiences with the use of rhythm and repetition.
- To provide sufficient time, space and the right equipment to enhance creative play.
- To be aware of the impact of sensory experience in early childhood.
- To respond to the specific needs of the child's social environment and the times in which we live.

Children usually join kindergarten at three years of age and are with us for three to four years.

The little three-year olds will enter into the group and will settle into establishing a sense of rhythm to the morning, three-year olds like to stay close to their teacher for a while. The teacher will be continuously aware that they are an example to be imitated and support little ones from undirected, uncontrolled behaviour into purposeful, focused activity by creating activities that both child and teacher can become involved in together, such as preparing snacks, scrubbing and laying the snack table, winding wool together, drawing, baking, painting, singing and playing together.

The four-year old is now living within the safety of rhythm and repetition within the kindergarten morning. Their social skills and ability towards imaginative/fantasy-based play is developing. These are magical years where expressions of imagination flow into their creative play. The kindergarten teacher is now a supporter of imaginative play, providing the right equipment, time and space for this to occur.

In the third and generally final year within the kindergarten, when the child turns six, they begin to show signs of making a transition from play to school readiness and the more formal environment they will enter in Class One. Where the will was active within the imagination of the three to five-year old, it joins forces within the world of the abstract idea. They will start doing separate projects with their teacher, known as daily work, to enable them to become accustomed to teacher-led activities and **working that have an appropriate time frame.**

Gross and fine motor skills increase alongside planned idea-based play with pre-conceived ideas.

Whilst in a Steiner-Waldorf kindergarten, child development can be expressed in these ways.

- ❖ In movement the three-year old is learning to self-manage, dress themselves, put their own slippers on, following the routine of the morning. By six years old, their challenges are: learning to weave, skip, climb, run and jump with ease.
- ❖ Play. Three-year olds like to play next to other children but can usually be observed playing alongside, rather than together. **For the four to five year olds, it is limitless and social play.** By six years old, the child shows signs of idea-based play and wanting more focused projects of work to take part in it.
- ❖ Drawing and painting. The teacher will observe a process from chaos to form, from the scribbling and un-formed pictures and paintings of a three-year old, to a six-year old's formed representations of their surrounding world.
- ❖ Language. Three-year olds are absorbing and learning new words, sounds and intonations rapidly. They imitate the speech they hear around them. By six years old, children are truly conscious of their speech. They enjoy rhyming, understand humour in speech, they consciously learn new words and sounds, vocabulary, alliteration and a deeper understanding of word meaning develops.

Steiner education is based on three principles.

Rhythm and repetition  
Imitation  
Play

### Rhythm and Repetition

A regular rhythm promotes security and self-confidence. Children have a sense of knowing what is going to happen in their day **and** week and do not need to ask what will happen on a regular basis, allowing children to feel and know their place in the world.

Rhythm and repetition help children towards an understanding of the past, present and future and strengthens and supports children's memory function.

A clear daily and weekly rhythm expanding into the seasonal round and festivals within the year brings a sense of belonging and security to each child.

Each morning the children are welcomed towards the morning activity.

Monday = Walk day: Go to the common - climbing, running, jumping, skipping, socialising and observing nature.

Tuesday = Craft day: Drawing, sticking, cutting, beeswax modelling, preparation for festivals e.g. making lanterns

Wednesday = Painting day: wet on wet

Thursday = Baking day:

Friday = Walk day: Tooting Common Triangle playground or Woodfields.

After the focused teacher-led activity, children move into creative play where they are free to choose what they want to play, they are encouraged to feel free to choose the play materials at hand.

Creative play is supported by the teacher, but it is recognised that authentic play is when it is not being manipulated from the outside by an adult.

During creative play some children like to help prepare snack and snack table.

Then everybody helps to tidy away.

Circle time follows - a time for singing, movement, poetry, snack time - all together.

Outdoor play, creative outdoor play, seasonal crafts, caring for the environment, gardening, story time/puppet show.

Have time or transition to after school care.

### Imitation

There are two magic words which indicate how the child enters into relation with his/her environment they are: Imitation and Example

Rudolf Steiner the education of the child.

Every day the teacher will offer examples of imitation and example, where the younger children in the group are able to stay by their teacher and become involved in the activities at hand to imaginative circle times with songs and poems and beautiful gestures to imitate to watching examples of kindness, creative discipline, fun, hard work, and singing together for example

Adults and children's following kindergarten rules, enabling children to learn and self-manage, to draw on their own sense on imitation rather than being reliant on explanation and direction.

### Play

Play is the key element in all Waldorf early years settings

A child's need to play is acknowledged within our early years.

"the child needs his will reaction her/his play in order to assimilate her/his experiences and make them fully their own" R. Steiner

A log becomes a telephone, a sausage roll, a train or a part of a puppet show, a cloth wrapped around child they become an ice queen, a pop star, a Gnome "you'll be" and "I'll be" are expressions of children understanding and taking steps in the world that they are living in.

"Children are dreamers, there is something almost spiritual in the imagination of a child, who picks up bits and pieces of its surroundings and memory and finds out how they fit together in a slow dream like process of discovery. They don't do this playing a computer game, they do this when they are allowed to sink into themselves...they do it when they have time"

Nicci Gerard – The observer. August 2000

Play within our early years is recognised as a strong developmental inner need and needs the right environment to flourish. Children's imagination and play is encouraged with unformed toys and creative activities.

The statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 0-5 years applies to all settings including ours. It sets out both learning and developmental requirements and safeguarding and welfare requirements for children from birth to the 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday.

You can find out more information about the EYFS in the Guide to the EYFS on the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship website and A Parents Guide to the EYFS on the government website.

Due to areas that conflict with the Steiner Waldorf early childhood principles and practice, we have received some exemptions and modifications to the EYFS learning and development requirements, under the 'established principle route'. These are in the areas of formal teaching of reading and writing, mathematics and use of IT/audio and electronic gadgetry. There are no exemptions from the safeguarding or welfare requirements. The list of exemptions and modifications can be seen. Please ask your kindergarten teacher or leader.

Parent surgeries – these are held weekly where parents are encouraged to attend, allowing a more private time to discuss their child’s progress within the setting. It is a time when parents and teachers can share their experience and observations of the child, in both home and school. The EYFS profile and the development within the framework will be looked at and discussed at this time.