



Exeter Steiner School *Curriculum policy*

Exeter Steiner School follows a curriculum based on the foundations laid down by Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner in the early twentieth century and developed by teachers who have worked with those insights in Steiner schools worldwide for over seventy years. The School is part of a worldwide network of over 700 Steiner-Waldorf schools, with over fifty in the UK and Ireland.

The Steiner curriculum recognises that physical, emotional, social and artistic development precede, and are the foundation of, intellectual skills, supporting the child in each stage of his or her growth as an individual. This helps to build the child's motivation and creativity, launching a life-long journey in learning while preserving the precious gift of childhood. Whilst current teaching still follows the basic underlying pedagogical principles laid down by Steiner himself, the curriculum and the way it is applied are continually being adapted to meet the pupils' needs in the modern world.

The key underlying principle of the curriculum is a commitment to working with Steiner's developmental insights. These are contained in a series of books and lectures which form on-going study material for the teachers in our school

These insights affirm:

That each child is unique, with their own path in life.

That the teacher's aim is to support the emerging individual in their all-round development.

That each stage of a child's development requires a different approach to education. In kindergarten, learning is based on imitation, whilst during the Lower School years, children learn through their imagination.

That artistic and imaginative teaching enables all pupils to access the subject with enthusiasm and understanding, regardless of ability.

That lesson content needs to mirror the pupil's developmental stage.

That lesson content needs to be related back to the human being in a moral and inspiring manner.

That pupil's motivation needs to arise from enthusiasm rather than ambition or fear.

That development of thinking, feeling and the will is addressed as equal and integrated partners.

That measurement of the pupil's progress against external and objective targets must take second place to an assessment of progress that takes into account the child's qualitative experience of life, school and self.

As children have highly variable individual needs, gifts and inclinations, we offer not only a wide range of subjects but also a balance of subjects to address academic, artistic, social and moral development equally.

Differentiation is implicit in the Curriculum and the method of delivery.

The curriculum offers a varied program for different age groups, as follows:

Early Years

Up to the age of seven, teaching works with the children's will, through activity, and through imitation. Traditional fairy tales and nature stories are used to address the feeling life of the child and gradually awaken an understanding of right and wrong. There is a seasonal rhythm and festivals are celebrated through the year.

A typical day will include:

- circle time: songs, movement, poems, drama and finger games
- creative play
- tidying up
- structured activity: painting, drawing, craft work, baking, wood work or cleaning
- snack time
- story telling
- outdoor play.

Lower School

The children are taught in mixed ability classes according to age. The class teacher, working with and through the children's imagination and their feeling life, guides their learning and development and will ideally stay with the class throughout their journey through the school. During this time, the children can develop love, trust and confidence in the authority of their teacher, and the teacher grows to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the children. This relationship between child and teacher is enhanced and supported by close co-operation with parents.

The day begins with a main lesson, which lasts nearly two hours. During this time, the class will study a single subject using activities such as walking and clapping rhythms, writing, maths, singing, movement, games, plays, poetry, painting, drawing and modelling. The main lesson curriculum is taught in six-week blocks and can be likened to a spiral as subjects are visited from year to year, each time the subject involves new insights and more depth of knowledge and understanding.

Specialist teachers in languages, crafts, music, art, gym or other subjects will work with the class, but the class teacher remains inwardly central to all aspects of class life. Wherever possible, other subjects and activities the class participates in will reflect the current main lesson theme.

See also:

For further reading:-

Martyn Rawson and Brien Masters (Eds.) *Towards Creative Teaching*. Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Publications, 1997.

www.steinerwaldorf.org

Tobias Richter and Brien Masters (Eds.) *The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum*. Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Publications, 2000. www.steinerwaldorf.org

Torin M. Finser, *School as a journey; the eight-year odyssey of a Waldorf teacher and his class*. Anthroposophic Press, 1994