

Curriculum policy

Introduction

Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School practices a curriculum adopted by approximately one thousand schools worldwide. It has been successfully implemented for over ninety years and adapted to local conditions. We are committed to offering an education designed at every level to meet the needs of the pupils at their various stages of emotional, intellectual and physical development.

Our school aims to provide an education according to the understanding of the developing human being as set out in the lecture cycles and books by Rudolf Steiner. Each child is seen as a unique individual with his or her own path in life. Our task is to help to remove the obstacles to this path and to support the emerging human beings in our care to develop inner freedom within a healthily functioning body endowed with a rich and coherent feeling life, so as to enable them to make their contribution to society while at the same time unfolding their own human potential.

The interplay between what lives within the children and what is to be brought to them as lesson content requires constant flexibility, and how a topic is presented to one particular class by one particular teacher will be quite individual. Each teacher considers the guidelines set out by Rudolf Steiner in planning their lesson content. This relationship between teacher and class is a crucially important factor. Through ongoing assessment, the teacher strives to be aware of each child's inherent capacities and of how these are being fostered through what is taught. The teacher can then set expectations which are appropriate for the pupil's ability and developmental stage.

Steiner education is divided into three phases corresponding to three seven year phases of childhood. The kindergarten for young children up to age six, lower school from seven to fourteen and upper school for fourteen plus. Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School comprises a Kindergarten and lower school (known as main school).

Kindergarten

The aim in Kindergarten is to build a bridge between home and school by creating a safe, warm and loving environment. This is to protect the wonder and delight up to the age of six. Teaching works with the children's will, through activity and through imitation. The day follows a regular rhythm of creative play, songs and counting games, lunch, outdoor play and story time, an activity such as food preparation, bread making, painting or modelling. There is also ring-time including songs and counting games, morning snack, outdoor play and story time. There is a seasonal rhythm and festivals are celebrated throughout the year.

Main School

Teachers work with and through the children's imagination and their feeling life. The structure of the day now changes, pupils are in classrooms with desks and Main Lessons are taught by the class teacher. Main lessons have a regular rhythm, including verses, movement, recall, rhythmic work, new material, written work, math's, music, singing reading, writing, craft and art are woven into the topic. French and Welsh are taught from

class one and is purely oral for the first year. From class six work becomes more intellectual and academic, formal science lessons are now introduced.

We provide a balance of subject lessons which include academic, artistic, crafts and physical activities. These correspond to the soul faculties in all children, in regard to their need to engage their thinking, feeling and will.

The curriculum is structured so children's differentiated needs can be met. The SENCO teacher will co-ordinate learning support to meet the specific learning needs of the many children - not to separate them from their class but to enable them to participate freely in class lessons, designed to address inner challenges.

Differentiation is implemented by various methods in single lessons in all subjects

- Making use of the Steiner three fold strategies of imitation, storytelling (picturing) and thinking.
- Each lesson having a multi-sensory approach; with visual, aural and kinaesthetic components.
- Keeping a rhythmic and balanced lesson.
- Ensure a variety of activities - from listening to doing.
- Ensuring a child-centred approach i.e responding to each child as an individual
- Allowing freedom of response to a lesson, so that pupils can produce very different work to reflect what they have learnt.
- Ensuring there are tasks ranging from simple to complex, to allow for different abilities.
- Using open-ended questions, so there is no wrong answer.
- Sometimes explaining first and demonstrating after, or demonstrating first and explaining afterwards - allows for different learning preferences.
- Structuring different worksheets, so that some pupils can be set achievable targets.
- Grouping text on the blackboard in different colours for different groups of pupils to undertake appropriate tasks.
- Using recall at the end of one lesson and at the beginning of the next to anchor information.
- Lesson format helps create a rhythmical balanced and approachable content.

Curriculum for class 1 to 8

The Steiner school curriculum is, by its nature, difficult to pin down in a few sentences. We recommend further reading at the end of the policy.

The Main Lesson

Throughout these eight years, the school day begins with a two hour long Main Lesson taught by the class teacher. The Main Lesson is central to Steiner Education and is seen as an artistic and integrated whole. It is organised into subject blocks lasting about three or four weeks each. Each block begins a new topic but within a block subjects may be interwoven. Each a main a lesson has several components which include practical, musical and artistic activities, movement, oral and written work.

Subject lessons

Subject lessons are given in Music, Painting, French, Welsh, Religion, Handwork, Crafts and Games. Three are often separate Math's, English and Art lessons in addition to Main Lesson work.

Music begins with singing, listening games, pentatonic flute and simple percussion instruments. Notation is taught in class three or four. Singing is an integral part of all lessons, including rounds and eventually part singing. The school is able to provide contact details of private tutors for music lessons.

Painting lessons use simple techniques with quality materials and the work develops over the years as the children change and according to their main lesson work.

French and Welsh are taught initially through games, songs and poems, reading, writing and grammar are taught from class three and four respectively.

Handwork progresses through knitting, crochet, felting and dyeing, sewing, embroidery and dressmaking.

Games lessons vary from skipping, Bothmer movement, maypole dancing, basketball and imaginative team games.

Class 1

There is a rhythm to the day, week and year and festivals are important. Teaching is pictorial and imaginative. The aim is to stimulate the intellect through activity, rhythm and imagination. Time is spent laying down good habits of classroom life and work, cultivating reverence for nature, respect for others and learning to connect with and care for the children's environment.

Writing is introduced using pictures, rhymes, stories, form drawing and movement. Reading begins with the children's own written work. Listening and speaking skills are also developed and nature stories and fairy tales provide the curriculum content. Number work is also taught with pictures, rhymes and stories. The four processes are introduced and a start is made on learning the times tables. The class also learn the pentatonic flute, paint with watercolours. In handwork they often start by making their own knitting needles.

Class 2

Stories from the lives of saints, legends and fables are the primary literary base for writing, speaking and reading. Cursive writing is begun and composition is introduced which aids spelling. Reading skills continue to develop, working with word families, vowels, digraphs and diphthongs. Maths work builds with mental practice and longer exercises moving on to larger numbers, number bonds and place value. Dynamic continuous form drawing is begun. Native American cultures are introduced through stories and craftwork. Nature stories help the children to understand the cycles of nature and this is reinforced by weekly walks.

Class 3

In class three the focus is on practical activities. Farming, gardening and building are often featured. Regular trips take place in connection with these topics and the children have a regular lesson in the school garden. The children now start to write in full sentences from stories and activities, they explore nouns, verbs, adjectives and punctuation. They also move lightly into descriptive and creative writing. In math's practice of all twelve times tables continues, long multiplication and long division are introduced. Money handling, and various

forms of measurement, linear, liquids, solids and temporal are introduced. In singing and music the children now move away from the pentatonic tone sets towards the diatonic.

Class 4

The aim is to meet the children's growing interest in the world and to provide more opportunities for independence in their work. Mythology is now introduced, especially the Norse myths and in form drawing Celtic knot work in particular is explored. In English, grammar work covers the tenses and parts of speech; in math's, fractions are introduced, using all four processes and measurements and area work is continued. There are main lesson blocks on local geography and local history. It begins with the school grounds and moves outward into the locality.

Other main lesson blocks on "Human and Animal" explore the form and functions of the human being which leads to a study of the animal kingdom.

Class 5

This year is a pivotal point between childhood and puberty where the children attain a level of balance and harmony. Mythology now approaches early history by looking at early civilizations such as India, Persia, Babylonia and Egypt. This then moves into Ancient Greece and the year culminates in a trip to the Steiner schools' Olympic Games. Games lessons include preparation for the Olympics. Geography becomes regional with a study of the British Isles and nature study takes the form of Botany. English work continues with parts of speech, further punctuation and further tenses. In Maths compass geometry is introduced as is the decimal system.

Class 6

The children's emergent intellectual faculties are now ready to be used more consciously. This year deductive, logical, analytical and critical faculties begin to be required. Physics lessons introduce optics, sonics and thermodynamics. There is also a geology block. History focuses on the Roman Empire with its practical, organised and legislative aspects. Roman Britain features and this leads to regular field trips. Geography now extends to Europe. In English lessons the conditional is taught and there are regular dictations and comprehension exercises, whilst science and history blocks introduce report writing and other writing forms. In maths, percentages, profit and loss, simple interest, proportion and ratio are covered and geometry lessons introduce the use of the protractor.

Class 7

Curriculum themes this year mirror the pupils' outer exploration of the world and their inner journey. English lessons move from descriptions of outer things to the descriptions of the inner feelings of wish, wonder and surprise. The children also write business letters and compositions on many different subjects and revise the grammatical forms of direct and indirect speech. They may also study a work of literature in depth. History explores the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery with the great voyages of the 15th to 17th centuries. Astronomy and studies of the night sky link with the voyages of discovery and geography encompasses the study of a continent, looking at the cultural, material and economic conditions of human societies. Graphs and algebra are introduced in math's and geometry continues. Physics continues with mechanics and inorganic chemistry is begun with combustion. Human biology includes health and hygiene as well as sex education.

Class 8

The teacher's role is to guide the pupils gradually into independent thinking and facilitate their increasing knowledge and power of deduction. The pupils begin to analyse subjects and ideas critically and become less dependent on the teacher's authority. In this final year, each pupil has to work independently on a substantial project of their own choosing and the class eight play is considered a major event in the school calendar.

English lessons continue with literature study, creative writing, narrative and descriptive prose. Maths continues with more complex arithmetic using roots and powers, compound interest and surface areas. The five basic Platonic solids are calculated and constructed, whilst algebra continues with the theory of equations, introducing more variables. Physics covers magnetism, electricity and electromagnetism; organic chemistry studies substances which build up the human body whilst biology examines the human eye, the muscles and the bone. A further astronomy block builds on work done in Class seven. History lessons this year cover the major trends in the development of Western culture from the seventeenth century to the present. Particular revolutionary periods, both political and economic are studied. Biographies of inventors, industrialists and social reformers are an on-going feature in these lessons. Human geography looks at climatic zones, in cultural, economic, industrial and social terms. Physical geography investigates tectonic plates, volcanic activity and erosion.

Curriculum resources

Towards creative teaching, K Avison

The Educational tasks and content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum.

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