

# Norwich Steiner School

## Curriculum Plan for Classes 1 to 10 (age 6-16)

Revised September 2010

### INTRODUCTION

Norwich Steiner School practices a curriculum adopted by approximately 1,000 schools worldwide. It has been successfully implemented for over 90 years and adapted in each school and country 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, in which each child is seen as a unique individuality 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.

This approach precludes the comparison of one child's 'performance' against another's. However, whilst we do not test in the usual sense of the word, 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 as Rudolf Steiner outlined. i.e. Kindergarten for young children up to age seven, lower school from age seven to fourteen and upper school for fourteen plus. Norwich Steiner School comprises two Kindergartens and a lower school (known as Main school); in 2010 the school will be undertaking a feasibility study to determine whether and when the school will develop an Upper School and to what age.

In many aspects of the Steiner Curriculum such as writing, reading, mathematics and science, what is recognisable as learning in the conventional sense does not seem to appear until much later than is usually the case. Nevertheless, the skills only seem delayed to the superficial eye and closer attention will show that seed preparations are being made in the soil of earlier consciousness for the faculties to germinate and grow rapidly in later years.

### 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 seven, 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, then ring-time including songs and counting games, morning snack, outdoor play and story time. There is a seasonal rhythm and festivals are celebrated through the year.

## Lower school

Once children start in the Lower School, they have a class teacher who will usually stay with them for the next 7-8 years. In all classes, as each child arrives at school, they are greeted warmly by their class teacher. This opportunity to make eye contact and shake hands on the threshold re-establishes the relationship between pupil and teacher and anchors the classroom as a place of learning.

In the Lower school, teachers work with and through the children's imagination and their feeling life. The structure of the day also now changes; pupils are in classrooms with desks and the class teacher teaches the 'Main Lessons'.

### **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 weeks each. Each block begins a new topic, but within a block subjects may be interwoven. Each Main Lesson has several components, including practical, musical and artistic activities, movement, and oral and written work.

### **Subject Lessons**

All classes have Music, Painting, French, German, Handwork and Claywork classes. Separate Games lessons commence in Class Three. Religion lessons are taught from class 3 onwards via stories, biographies and looking at other religions. From Class Six Woodwork and Sciences are introduced.

Music begins with singing, listening games, flute and simple percussion instruments. Notation proper begins in Class 4. Singing is an integral part of all lessons, including rounds and eventually part singing.

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

French and German are currently offered to all classes, taught initially through games, songs and poems; reading, writing and grammar are introduced from Class Four.

Handwork progresses through a whole range of skills, including knitting, crochet, felting and dyeing, sewing, embroidery and clothes making.

## Curriculum by Class

### **CLASS 1**

In this year the children make the important transition from the kindergarten to school where they begin formal learning. During this first year the class acquires the good habits of classroom life and work, which will form the basis of their time together in the school.

Cultivating reverence for nature, care for the environment, respect for others, interest in the world and a feeling of confidence in their teachers are the moral aims for class 1 and the following classes. The teachers aim to lead the children into becoming a socially cohesive group who care for and listen to each other.

The children are led by their teacher to a first experience of the forms, sounds and sequencing of letters and number symbols by using pictures, rhymes and stories.

The children learn to recognise and memorise these with lots of practice involving movement, verses, drawing and writing.

The Steiner curriculum usually begins with a subject unknown in other schools: “form drawing”. The children have experience of the difference between straight lines and curves and observe the forms in which they can be found – the square, the triangle, the circle and things around them. They learn much through movement, modeling and stepping as well as the writing of numbers and sums. Freehand drawing of forms, which will lead to geometry, is practiced with big crayons; rulers and sharp pencils will come later.

In English, writing is introduced using pictures, rhymes and stories, and practised with form drawing and movement. Reading begins with the children’s own written work and familiar songs and poems. Oral work plays an important role with equal emphasis on both listening and speaking through daily recitation of poetry and verses and encouraging the children to describe their experiences and recall the stories they have heard.

From class 1 the children learn two foreign languages by the direct method of listening and speaking. They are immersed in these languages through the means of poems, stories and dialogues, all learned by heart and enacted in context.

In class 1 the oneness of humankind, animals, nature and the heavens is experienced in an archetypal way in traditional fairy tales and local folklore. Stories are also chosen which portray the cycles of the natural world and especially the seasonal changes.

In arithmetic, the children experience the totality and the individuality of numbers. Whole numbers are introduced using pictures familiar to the child’s world (the sun, parts of the body, petals of flowers etc). Then come the four basic arithmetical operations with their symbols also introduced in a pictorial way. Rhythmical counting, recitation of tables, number bounds up to 20 and mental arithmetic are all practised intensively in the early years.

In painting with watercolours the inner qualities of a colour are explored. The aim is not to copy external objects but to experience and “listen” to the inner language of colours. The children illustrate their main lesson books with pencils and crayons, an activity which unites the dynamic of line drawing with the mood and feeling expressed by the colours.

In music the inner “colours” or character of the notes are explored. The music the children play with their simple wooden flutes is initially related to the songs they have learnt.

Traditional movement and ring games are learnt and practised, which develop skills and coordination as well as having a strong social component.

All children learn to knit and sew and use basic handicraft tools (scissors, craft knives, adhesives, string etc) and work with a range of materials. The children produce useful articles such as recorder cases, potholders, shopping nets and so on. This schooling of fine motor skills, co-ordination combined with the artistic and practical element provides a sound basis for the subsequent basis of practical intelligence.

## CLASS 2

The initial experiences of the first year are deepened and enhanced in class 2. Stories from the lives of saints, legends and fables allow differentiation between humankind, animals, nature and the heavens to begin to be demonstrated. These stories also provide the primary literary base for writing, speaking and reading,

Form drawing begins now to stimulate the activity of forming mental pictures, providing an opportunity to feel the balance, proportion, symmetry, integration and character of the forms and the dynamic movements they embody.

In English, the children proceed from capital letters to lower case cursive handwriting. About a third of the writing is now composed by the children, thus helping their spelling ability to develop, the other two thirds comprising texts prepared by the teacher and copied from the board or dictated by the teacher. Reading skills continue to develop, working with word families and vowels, and moving from familiar to new texts. A differentiated approach to reading may now begin to be used including whole class reading, child to child and child to adult reading.

Maths work builds with mental practice and longer exercises, moving on to larger numbers, number bonds, odd and even numbers, columns and carrying over.

In foreign languages, the children carry on with the oral acquisition of an extensive vocabulary of everyday things and situations and a practical usage of most of the main grammatical structures of the language.

In music, the children expand their range of tunes and individuals take the step to small solo parts within the context of the class as a choir.

## CLASS 3

This is the equivalent point of entry into Key Stage Two in the National Curriculum guidelines.

The Class 3 curriculum is designed to meet the changing needs of the 8 to 9 year old child who is seen as 'crossing the Rubicon' or going through an important transitional stage in their path towards adulthood. At the ninth year the child becomes, sometimes quite suddenly, aware of him or her self as a separate identity. This can be accompanied by fears of being alone, of death, of loss and even feelings of inadequacy or depression.

The Steiner Curriculum takes this delicate threshold stage into consideration and provides subject matter that is reassuring but also challenging.

The year's focus is on practical activities, especially farming, gardening and building. By involving the whole class in the experience of working together in building, farming and other examples of work projects, the class teacher helps to transform the initial feeling of separateness from the physical world into a feeling of responsibility for it.

The teacher needs now to lay down clear guidelines for behaviour and to give the children confidence in the authority of all teachers. The children should have a strong sense of the social unity of the class.

Stories are now from the Old Testament, including Genesis and other creation stories. In English, the children begin to write full sentences from stories and activities, explore nouns, verbs, adjectives and punctuation, and move on to descriptive and creative writing, and the beginnings of punctuation. Neat legible handwriting is more strongly encouraged.

Practical activities such as building and farming prepare the children for later insight into economics and ecology. Pupils learn about the historical development of farming, how it links to the seasons, the practicalities of sowing, tending, harvesting and storing crops and the importance of working with nature. A farm visit is usually organised, which provides an opportunity to see animal husbandry and the basics of food production in progress.

In arithmetic, measurement is an important theme, in which children examine body measurement – using feet, hands and thumbs, and where they are introduced to standardised measurements – imperial and metric; and time measurement, including the 24-hour clock, seasons, months, weeks, years and days.

## CLASS 4

The aim of the class 4 curriculum is to meet the child's growing interest in the world and to provide more opportunities for independence in their work. The children should form a sense of where they are in relation to their environment, in both a social and geographical sense.

The study of Norse mythology is a typical class 4 theme and it is the last time in legend where the gods and humans are still very closely interconnected. It contrasts to the class 3 study of the Old Testament in which one God issues commands from heaven and has absolute authority over the people. In Norse legend, there are many gods and they are not all good. By class 4 children are beginning to question the authority of adults and the Norse myths help to meet this questioning that is taking place within the child.

This theme of growing self-awareness is further continued in the Man and Animal Main Lesson, where the relationship between the two is explored to gain a living understanding of how mankind occupies the world in relationship to other living creatures.

Continuing this process of detailed discovery in the exploration of grammar, a dissection of language's living components, such as verb tenses, is made and the structures of the written word are learnt. Likewise the basic introductions to mathematics that were accepted in previous years are developed into fractions and complex divisions and multiplications.

In foreign language lessons, writing and reading will now begin to pave the way for the introduction of grammar.

In music note lengths and time value are added to the musical notation begun in class 3. In keeping with this, singing and playing in unison leads to rounds in several parts.

There are main lesson blocks on local geography and local history, beginning with the school grounds and ideally leading on to local sightseeing trips. They discover how much depends on the type of soil and the lie of the land and learn what influences have been brought to bear during the course of history. They also learn to make the transition from pictorial drawing to symbolic representation in map-making. Work on time, the seasons and the points of the compass are all relevant here.

## CLASS 5

This year is a pivotal point between childhood and puberty, where the children attain a level of balance and harmony.

Two main themes for class 5 are Ancient Civilisations and Botany.

The narrative thread for Ancient civilisations often begins with the fall of Atlantis and the exodus led by Manu in his boat pulled along by a giant fish. Manu and his followers initially settle in the Gobi desert. From this original settlement, groups set off to establish new civilisations in India, followed by Persia, then Babylonia, Egypt and finally moving on to classical ancient Greece.

Botany lessons form part of an age-specific sequence that allows the children to understand how they themselves are related to the kingdoms of nature. Continuing from the previous year's 'man and animal' main lesson, in Class 5 the children study their relationship to the plant kingdom.

The Class 5 Botany Main Lesson might begin with the children exploring the various different forms that the dandelion plant takes during the course of the year: a small rosette of leaves in spring, a bright yellow flower in summer, a white 'clock' of seeds in autumn and an empty withered stem in winter. Having taken in the whole plant, the children go on to look at the five main parts of a plant: root, stem, leaves, flowers

and fruit.

This is followed by a journey through the worlds of algae, mosses, fungi, ferns and conifers, which collectively can be used to represent the way in which primitive plant forms have evolved over millions of years. This first Main Lesson is followed later in the year by others which involve study of the different botanical families and an introduction to the life processes that take place in plants. There will also be a more detailed look at flowering plants and the process of pollination.

The year culminates in a trip to the national Steiner School Olympic Games staged at the longest established Steiner School in Sussex and attended by all Steiner schools in the UK, along with some from other European countries.

Games lessons include preparation for the Olympics, including the following activities: javelin and discus; long jump and high jump; various running events including the dash, relay and mini marathon.

Geography becomes regional, with a study of the British Isles, and nature study takes the form of botany.

English work develops with direct speech, converting from active to passive voice, punctuation, more tenses and vocabulary work.

In maths, compass geometry is introduced, as is the decimal system, as a preparation for logical causal thinking, leading to percentages and thus to the first mathematical discovery of causes.

## CLASS 6

During Class 6 the curriculum seeks to stimulate the child's growing curiosity about the world they live in. While studying the natural sciences (geography, geology, botany and physics) the teacher directs attention to the laws of natural phenomena.

In physics, for example, gravity, magnetism, heat, light and sound are looked at. In geography the configurations of the earth's layers and landmasses are investigated, focusing on Europe, her peoples and cultures.

The Geology Main Lesson concentrates on discovering the substance and materials of land and looks into the varied climates and vegetation round the globe.

Through the study of history the children encounter the natural law of cause and effect.

Their growing capacity to think causally is deepened by sequencing of the subject matter so that the past can be seen as a meaningful process leading up to present times. In this journey it becomes evident that the human race has played a profoundly influential role in shaping history. The study begins with Alexander the Great, moves on to the rise and fall of the Roman Empire and culminates in the Middle Ages and Islam.

The craft curriculum interweaves with the historical subjects through the creation of mosaics based on Roman relics.

Clay modeling of Europe and her countries is used to explore further the content of the Geography Main Lesson, and this topic also allows an expansion of geology through the modeling of rock and land formations.

Botany is researched through the observation of plants and natural forms in still-life drawing and in painting the vegetation found in different climatic regions.

In mathematics the children are encouraged to develop their increasing interest in accuracy. High standards are set for the presentation of geometric drawings and constructed shapes. Artistic abilities are developed by using colour and pattern to enhance shapes while simultaneously becoming familiar with the

practice of fundamental mathematical laws.

Practical business mathematics is studied so the children begin to understand how the world of business and finance works. The concepts of interest, percentages, discounts, exchange, V.A.T. and profit and loss are learned and applied practically as the children plan, produce and sell a product through their own business venture.

The English curriculum builds on the study of grammar made in the previous year. The focus moves to direct and indirect speech and verb tenses. The foundations of good essay writing are forged and then applied across the curriculum when describing physics experiments, writing synopses of historical accounts and so forth.

The children's imaginations are fueled by the writing of poetry, stories and through the recitation of poetic ballads and prose whose roots stem from the world of nature and historic events.

In movement/games, as the children move towards adolescence, as well as working hard to develop skills that will be useful to them in more formal sport (which is introduced in class 7), they start to go for class hikes (e.g. along Hadrian's wall) and have a series of visits to a climbing wall where they will be introduced to learning a new skill to challenge their growing strength.

## Class 7

The main theme for Class 7 is an exploration of the transition in history from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and the Age of Discovery with the great voyages of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In keeping with the Steiner principle of teaching reflecting the child's development, these topics mirror the child's own transition; they are moving from their own Dark Ages to their Age of Enlightenment.

At this stage, the child's potential for depth of feeling is increased and the music and art of the Renaissance meet that in the curriculum. Class 7 is a year of feeling, and feeling in balance. To complement this, in their art classes pupils produce beautiful views of Venice and other pieces reflecting the mood and style of the Renaissance, and are capable of producing very mature work.

Other Main Lesson themes for Class 7 include astronomy and studies of the night sky, linking with the voyages of discovery.

Geography encompasses the study of a continent, looking at the cultural, material and economic conditions of human societies.

Graphs and algebra are introduced in maths, whilst continuing to build on geometry.

Physics continues with mechanics and inorganic chemistry is begun with combustion. Human biology features this year, including sex education.

In games, this is the year when a whole range of formal sports are taught and experienced by the children, as they develop muscle and strength appropriate to these activities, as well as now having sufficient personal standing in the world to be ready for the challenge of competitive sports. These include softball, tennis, cricket and basketball, as well as cross-country running and, later in the year, orienteering-using maps.

Gymnastic activities include learning to somersault, vaulting and various forms of wrestling. To support their growing sense of individuality and personal journey, games lessons for class 7 children include a series of visits to a local outdoor activity centre where they learn to sail solo on small boats.

## 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 8 play is considered a major event in the school calendar.

English lessons continue with literature study, creative writing and narrative and descriptive prose.

Maths continues with more complex arithmetic using roots and powers, compound interest and surface areas, and 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 and the muscles and bone.

An astronomy block builds on the work done in Class 7.

History lessons this year cover the major trends in the development of Western culture from the 17th Century to the present, examining in particular revolutionary periods, both political and economic. 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, and physical geography investigates Tectonic plates, volcanic activity, and erosion.

Sports introduced in class 7 are continued and volleyball is introduced and ideally the children will start competing in tournaments. Gymnastic activities continue to develop Somersaults, handsprings and vaults, with the use of appropriate circuit training to help build up strength.

Other outdoors pursuits such as kayaking and hiking are introduced at this age; each activity providing opportunities for learning self-reliance and survival aspects of sport in relation to the environment.

## Class 9

In the first year of Upper School the child grapples with the world of great ideas and ideals, and how these translate into major developments such as the French and Russian Revolutions or the American Wars of Independence. The adolescent child experiences extremes, and will engage with the dangers of fanatical idealism and its effects on European and World history. Globalisation and the communications revolution also feature strongly.

Revolutions feature in Physics too: the steam and combustion engines, electric motor, telephone, TV and computer. Through biography the relationship between ideas and invention is explored.

Mathematics progresses from equations to probability calculations, providing practice in formal, logical thinking. It also includes all kinds of quadratic equations and more complex surface and volume calculations.

In Geometry the work with Platonic solids continues, introducing diagonal section, parallel projection and conic sections. Ellipse, parabola and hyperbola are developed using dynamic exercises

In Biology the human being is explored through skeleton, muscles and sense organs. Understanding the shape and function of bones is seen as key task for children of this age.

In Chemistry the emphasis is on the provenance of substances, through combustion, carbonisation, decomposition, and the processes relating to fossil fuels, distillation and purification.

In Geography the Earth's crust is studied through tectonic and geomorphic processes. The study of dynamic polarities, of erosion and volcanic activity, as well as the extremes of geological forces and time scales, are particular suited to this age group.

Art becomes subject in its own right now, providing creative balance to the ordered, inorganic worlds of physics and chemistry. Through art they are free to create their own order. The History of Art, from Ancient Egypt to Greece and Rome, and from early Christian to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, explores art as a reflection of changing human consciousness.

In drawing, the technique of chiaroscuro (black and white) encourages Class 9 children to express their own experience of polarity while allowing them to explore the 'grey areas' of life.

In English the origins and history of drama and theatre are studied. Drama itself is a subject for both study and practical skills. It is above all through Shakespeare, his characters and his poetry, that students experience the world of image and metaphor.

In literacy, the children develop a more conscious relationship to language, through book reports, study skills and essays, as well as through the study of syntax and style.

In Foreign Languages the emphasis is on biography: inventors, artists and personalities relating to history lesson. All aspects of grammar are reviewed and a balance is sought between humour, biography, everyday usage and exactness of expression, with practical oral experience remaining central.

In Music the biographies of great musicians are studied and placed side by side (ie Mozart and Beethoven). Great works are listened to, played and sung in conjunction with the Upper School choir and orchestra.

Handwork and crafts include carpentry and joinery, dressmaking (using own patterns), copper beating and basket making, in which the emphasis is always on providing for real needs in the world.

In ITC, word processing is learnt for use in practical applications such as presenting work and laying out school magazines.

Gardening extends to landscaping, laying paths, building steps and fencing. Practical agricultural experience is also undertaken with the emphasis on experiencing physical hard work and teamwork. Environmental stewardship is also studied.

In games, in support of the need for pupils to learn to take responsibility for their own actions, the sports already introduced are progressed with an emphasis on timing and more focussed application. Sports such as volleyball and basketball play an increasing role in the Upper School and in athletics, shot put, discus and javelin can be practised. Other sports include archery and fencing.

In gymnastics the new focus is a conscious overcoming of obstacles through courage and inner focus – including back and forward somersaults, more challenging vaults, parallel bars and handsprings.

## Class 10

The Class 10 pupil is involved in finding his or her place in an expanding world as the personality becomes more individualised and as the individual's awareness expands.

This simultaneous inward and outward movement is clearly seen in Geography, where we now include the oceans and atmosphere, climatic zones and, looking inward, the earth's core. This leads towards a growing

appreciation of the Earth's biosphere and ecology, of its intricate rhythms and cycle.

Gardening now focuses on cultivation, propagation and grafting. Practical experience in forestry is also offered.

History, in tandem with Geography, looks at human and cultural evolution as governed by earth and landscape, and reaches back to pre-history, the Palaeolithic Revolution and the Ice age. The development of agriculture leads on to the establishment of urban civilisations and their laws and instruments (ie writing and printing), as well as the evolution of social structures.

In English the focus is on the transition from myth to literature, from collective to individual experience. The origin and structure of language are studied through linguistics, poetic diction and aesthetics.

In Art, formal composition is studied, with an emphasis on the Art of Northern Europe. Painting is reintroduced, and the pupil develops an expanding vocabulary of colour with which to express mood and atmosphere. Printmaking, applied to a wide range of media, is also studied.

The work with Modern Languages is now broadened to include the study of humorous texts and idiomatic expression. Comparative studies of grammar (ie between English and a foreign language) and the evolution of language are also studied.

In Music the appreciation of music continues to be developed through listening, playing and singing. More formal aspects of music study are introduced, including the exploration of harmony.

In Mathematics the emphasis is on practical applications, with an introduction to trigonometry leading to a surveying main less. This involves estimation, ground measurement and theoretical calculations as well as the use of the theodolite.

In Chemistry the pupils deepen their work with substances, studying acid and alkali, crystallisation of salt, regular and semi-regular solids and their laws of symmetry.

Crafts and Handworks focus on the role of the right angle and the perpendicular in pottery, technical drawing, ironwork (forging) and dressmaking.

In Technology the cycle of raw material to processed material to finished product is studied, as with thread to textile, or tree planting to joinery. Technical applications in everyday life, such as gears, toilet flush, vehicle maintenance, are also explored. Recycling is also studied in Class 10.

In ITC the effect of technology on the human being is explored. What is information how is it stored and what is the social dimension of access to information? Using basic circuits, pupils create an adding machine, to help them achieve a basic understanding of how a computer works.

The games curriculum of class 10 essentially builds on what has been established, practising and developing technique and confidence.

## **REFERENCES**

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