

Talking Trees

the newsletter for Norwich Steiner School, Kindergartens & Parent & Child Groups

30th September 2009

Dates for your diary

Monday 5th October – Events team meeting
Saturday 10th October – School Open Day
Monday 19th October- Events team meeting
Wednesday 21st October – Parent’s evening (Birch)
Friday 16th October – Camilla Carr talk (see article)
Wednesday 4th November – Parents evening
(Maple & Chestnut kindergartens)
Friday 13th November – Martinmas festival
Sunday 22nd November - Advent Fayre
Sunday 29th November – Advent Garden (festival)
Wednesday 3rd February – Parent’s evening (Birch)
Saturday 27th February – School Open Day
Wednesday 10th March – Parents evening
(Kindergartens)
Wednesday 26th May – Parent’s evening (Birch)

Afternoon Care

By Priscilla Gibbons, afternoon care supervisor

From the second week of the new term we will continue to share our outdoor time between the two garden areas, thus allowing a variety of experiences for the children. We will be in the old garden on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays, and in the new garden on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The children will therefore need to be collected at 3.30pm from the appropriate garden.

Please make sure that if you normally use afternoon care on a particular day, that you let us know (preferably using the afternoon care booking board in reception) to let us know when children are not coming. This would save afternoon care staff from needing to find out where children are who have not arrived as expected in afternoon care, as well as ensuring that we know whether we have enough space for other children who’s parents may wish to occasionally book their child on for the afternoon.

Email policy

School Administration team

As many parents do not have regular access to email, we feel that it is more useful if information and requests that parents have previously asked Carol to send round by email is posted instead on a notice board in the reception area. This will ensure that all parents have equal access to information.

Summer Camp

Nik Simpson, Kindergarten parent

My first and lasting impression of Summer Camp was the happiness of the children: earth-smudged, smelling of sun and wind, they all looked like they had tumbled out of a story book.

My family arrived mid-week, a day into the camp and while my husband and I puzzled over tent poles, our daughters disappeared into the trees to take the first of endless turns on the rope swing.

The campsite set up at Whitwell Hall, was a space the whole family could let go in. The camp organisers created the freedom that is generated by just the right amount of structure: a rota for the chores of cooking and clearing and a handful of activities such as walks, picnics and scavenger hunts, to guide the children in their exploration of summertime in the woods.

As aware modern parents (many of us living in the city), we constantly seek to find opportunities for our children to develop their own memories of living outdoors: the damp, bejewelled grass on waking at dawn; the sudden drift and sting of wood-smoke while suppering around the campfire; staying up late to catch a summer sunset and the first stars.

In the introduction to his book *Last Child in the Woods*, the American writer Richard Louv states: ‘Nature does not steal time; it amplifies it.’ As a family we may only have spent a day and a night at Whitwell hall, but it felt much longer and was the most inspiring thing we did all summer.

Have you noticed the Notice Boards?

Charlotte Duffield, Publicity team & Events team

There has been a reorganisation of the space in the foyer and the school Notice Board now occupies both walls and is gradually spilling over into the Reception area. There are dedicated spaces for information from the School, Kindergarten, Parent & Child Group and the Afternoon Care teams.

There are also sections for all of the School Support Teams and other associated school groups such as the Singing Group and the Study Group. There are several new additions:

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED AND JOBS THAT NEED DOING

This section will list everything from moving sand and sweeping the driveway to requests from teaching staff and teams for help with projects or individual items.

SCHOOL WISH LIST

Will list all sorts of things that are required by the school and teams and that you may be able to donate from home. We are very grateful for all gifts and contributions but would ask you to check with the requester before bringing items in just in case the wish has been fulfilled.

SCHOOL DONATIONS SALE BOARD

If you have any unwanted and saleable items you can advertise them here and payment is by suggested donation to the school. This has only been up and running a few days and is already working. It's a great way to recycle items and to do a bit of fundraising for the school.

Please have a look at the Notice Boards when you have a moment and check regularly for updated information. We hope you enjoy reading and using them. We would very much like the boards to have a seasonal feel so if you would like to help decorate them, we will shortly be working on our autumn theme, please let Carol know.

Healing and forgiveness Surviving a kidnapping in Chechnya

By Jo Tyler, Kindergarten parent

I first met Camilla Carr in 2000 when I was working in Moscow for the same humanitarian and peace-building organisation Camilla was part of when she and her partner Jon James were kidnapped in Chechnya in 1997. They had gone to

Chechnya in the aftermath of a bloody (and shockingly under-reported) war to help set up and teach in the 'Little Star Centre' for war-traumatised children. They used expressive arts and counselling to help the children release their fear. Two months after they arrived they were kidnapped by armed and masked men and held in captivity for over fourteen months.

They experienced everything from threat of execution, rape, and mental torture to moments of compassion and kindness. They survived by using tools such as T'ai Chi, meditation and humour, and by creating a dialogue with their captors, looking beneath their masks of fear and anger to reach the small flame of humanity within.

I travelled with Camilla in 2000 to a conflict resolution workshop for young people which took place in another North Caucasus republic, very near to Chechnya, and shared with my colleagues from the region, some of whom had been involved in securing her and Jon's release, a sense of awe at Camilla's courage, inner strength, resilience, warmth and generosity.

Camilla and Jon published a book about their experiences, *The Sky is Always There*, which was broadcast on Radio 4 last year. Camilla talks in schools, prisons and other organisations and runs creative experiential workshops exploring conflict and forgiveness. She is active in *The Forgiveness Project*, and is also studying for an MA in Dramatherapy.

I am delighted that Camilla is coming to our school to talk about her journey through trauma, survival, healing and forgiveness at 7.30pm on Friday 16 October, and hope that many of us will come and feel, as I have, inspired by her openness and compassion. (Admission: £5/4 (concs.)). Refreshments available. Proceeds to *The Little Star Centre* in Chechnya, which is continuing its psychosocial support for children who have been traumatised by the wars.

What is the School Management Team? What do they do?

By Jacqui Armour, School Management Team

With help from the Steiner-Waldorf Schools Fellowship Advisory Service, Norwich Steiner School is working towards using a model of 'Associative Leadership' in how it governs and manages the organisation. As part of this process, the School Management Team are writing a series of short introductory articles for News in Brief,

explaining some of the key concepts. In this edition we will be considering the School Management Team.

The School Management Team is not 'management' in the traditional sense, with no responsibility for management of staff. Rather, it co-ordinates people and resources, and acts as a bridge between the School Governance Team (the Trustees) and the school Support Teams, thus being aware of both the long term interests and the day to day running of the school. This enables it to hold an awareness of, and make decisions about, the best **medium** term interests of the whole school.

Guided by the School Development Plan (made up of team plans from all School Support Teams), the School Management Team is responsible for monitoring and supporting the work of the School Support Teams, ensuring that there is a good standard of documentation (team plans, meeting agendas and minutes, policies and procedures), organising resources, and enabling the School Support Teams to work effectively.

The School Management Team is appointed by, and directly accountable to, the Collegiate (more about the Collegiate next time).

If you have any questions about this article or any other aspect of how the school is managed and governed, please contact Jacqui Armour (School Management Team).

If you have any questions about the Steiner-Waldorf Schools Fellowship Advisory Service (SWAS), please contact Kevin Avison (email: swas@steinerwaldorf.org).

If you have any questions about the Associative Leadership approach to running Steiner-Waldorf schools, please contact either Kevin Avison and/or Jonathan Wolf-Phillips (email: jonathan@new-leadership.com). Jonathan has been working with SWAS for some years now, helping them in one of their key tasks of providing direct support to schools.

Exciting developments...

By Victoria Jeckells, Events team

The school café will be moving to larger premises for open days! Due to the great demand for yummy food and soaking up the relaxing atmosphere it is felt that more space is required, so

the café is moving to the gym. Although this poses a few logistical challenges the Events Team feel that with a little help from our friends anything is possible.

Our aim is to provide wholesome and nutritious food as well as some indulgent treats, it is important that we cater for a variety of dietary requirements. All the food we serve is vegetarian and nut free.

The next Open Day is on the 10th October so please come along and support the school; feel free to bring friends and family. It is a great opportunity to see the beautiful premises, hear the informative talks given by teaching staff on various aspects of Steiner education and of course visit our new café.

Thank you to everyone who has helped run the café and all those great bakers beavering away at home making delicious food, we continue to need all your help. As with previous events baking rotas will soon be circulated, we would be very grateful if people could stick to the suggestions made on the rotas. WE feel that a smaller variety of food will be more manageable to serve and display along with juggling the change of location.

If anyone has any time they could spare to help with preparations before the event, set up on Friday evening or actually on the Open Day itself, there are always many jobs to be done. Please contact Tor (parent to Isabella & Tobias in Chestnut Kindergarten) on 01493 701240 or events@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk, this is a group email that will go to the team but if address to individuals they will receive them. We look forward to seeing you there.

Events Team

Charlotte Duffield, Events team

The Events Team has reconvened after the summer and we are starting to plan our events for the year. As ever we are an ambitious lot. In addition to our support of the school on Open Days we are in the throes of organising the Advent Fayre, we hope to schedule at least three talks on aspects of parenting and Steiner education, and we would like to achieve our long term goal of putting on some social events too. We have also begun the process of getting a small shop up and running to sell second hand clothes and craft items.

“Events” is a great School Support Team to be a part of. The projects that we are involved in are rewarding, inspiring and nourishing. We get to present the school at its very best – adorned with flowers or decorations, full of colourful displays of work and with the aroma of home-cooked food wafting down the corridor or across the field. The build up to events is usually hard work but it is always fun and it’s satisfying. On Open Days the building is brimming with the sense that something educationally unique and very special happens here and I am always reminded of the beauty and care that attracted us to Steiner education.

As this new term starts we are charged with a renewed energy and enthusiasm, which is lucky because as once again we have hit the ground running! At the moment we are a core group of five, with helpers for individual events. We would really like to encourage some other parents to join us, either as core team members or as helpers on projects. We simply can’t have enough volunteers.

We meet fortnightly, on a Monday at the moment. The next meeting is on 5th October at 7.30pm at the school. It will focus on the Advent Fayre but will also include progress reports on other tasks. For helpers attendance at meetings is welcomed but not necessary as long as we are in regular contact, either in the playground or by phone/email. For core team members it is preferable whenever possible.

No specific skills are required; our jobs include everything from washing-up to word processing and from planning to painting. The thing we need most is your time and some commitment.

If you would like any more information about the Events Team please get in touch, you can phone me on 01508 495033 or email events@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk (this is a group email address and emails are picked up by the addressee). If you would like to come along to our next meeting we will welcome you with open arms and feed you homemade cake.

Date of the October meetings:

Monday 5th October 7.30pm at the school
Monday 19th October 7.30pm venue to be confirmed.

Advent Fayre

Sunday 22nd November 11am – 3pm
By Charlotte Duffield, Events Team

Following the success of last year’s Advent Fayre the Events Team is currently putting together the plans for this year’s event. Families will be invited to come along and join our festive celebration and hopefully buy some great Christmas gifts. We are proposing to include all the elements that were so enjoyed last year including workshops for children, storytelling, craft stalls, BBQ or similar hot food, a raffle, songs from the school singing group, a cafe selling seasonal treats and an opportunity for everyone to join in some carol singing.

We are holding a meeting at the school on Monday 5th October at 7.30pm to discuss these proposals and work out whether we have enough people on board to go ahead. If you have any ideas for the Fayre or are able to offer a commitment of help to organise, or publicise or help on the day, please do come along. If you get involved it will not be necessary to attend lots of meetings (unless you want to, and then you are very welcome!) just to keep in regular contact with the team to keep the event moving forward.

Once we are up and running with a detailed proposal there will be a dedicated section on the notice board in the main foyer that will outline all areas of the Fayre and the volunteer help required, so please keep an eye out for that and sign up for anything you can help with.

If you are not able to come along on 5th October and would like to get involved, you can contact us via our group email address events@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk or you can call Charlotte on 01508 495033.

Publicising School Events

By Charlotte Duffield, Publicity team

By now the enclosed Open Day flyers have probably dropped out into your lap – so apologies for that, we just wanted to get some to every family. Now that you have them we would ask you if you could please put them up in your car window, house window, local shop or pass on to someone you think may be interested. We need all the help we can get with publicising our events, and poster/flyer campaigns have proved to be one of the most successful and cost effective ways of advertising. There is no rhyme or reason to which poster sites are most beneficial,

it is just a case of the right poster in the right place at the right time!

If you are able to put up 1 or 2 posters in your local shops or are prepared to take 10 and cover a town centre we would really like to hear from you. There is a form on the notice board in the Publicity Team section where you can put your name and contact details and the areas you are able to cover/number of posters you would like. The posters and flyers will then be collated for you each time we run a poster campaign and passed to you by a member of the Publicity Team.

If you would like to help on an ad hoc basis poster are available in reception or from Carol. Colour posters are the most effective and there is usually a small stock of these, along with the black and white ones. Alternatively, posters can be supplied as a PDF file for you to print at home and distribute.

If you have ideas of great poster sites that we do not currently cover, please let us know via our group email address publicity@nowichsteinerschool.co.uk or you can call Charlotte on 01508 495033.

A big thanks to all our regular poster distributors, we look forward to welcoming some more avid advertisers onto the team.

Michaelmas festival in the Kindergarten

By Anna Letts, Chestnut Kindergarten teacher

The festival of Michaelmas arrives with the first hints of autumn, and is a stepping stone in the pathway to Christmas which is a festival of light. As summer fades away, we must develop an inner light, and the will-strength to embrace winter's dark days. This is a chance to also face ay darkness or fear that lies within ourselves.

The fruits of harvest time help to imbue in us this strength. St Michael is depicted with a sword (the symbol of light and courage), and having 'overcome' a dragon (the symbol of fear and darkness).

In Kindergarten, this festival is celebrated within the dream consciousness, without too much emphasis on facts. During Michelmas week we will bake a bread dragon (to eat on the festival). We will also enjoy several will-engaging activities such as pressing apples to make juice (during outside time), making butter (on the festival day), and

grinding all the wheat we have threshed to make flour.

The colour red, as seen all around us in the fruits and berries, the changing leaves, and the autumn evening sunset represents the courage we must find within.

Kindergarten wish list

From kindergarten teaching staff

Does anybody have any old pots and pans, colanders, sieves, spoons, or baking trays? We would love them in the kindergarten to play with in the new sandpit. Please pass any donations to Carol in the office or to kindergarten teachers. (please no non stick). Thank you very much from the kindergarten staff.

News from Elder Class

By Michael Higgins, class teacher

This term, Elder (class 5/6) are beginning their yearlong study of Eastern & Middle Eastern ancient mythologies. Our voyage sees us set out from the legendary land of Atlantis and will take us through Ancient India, Persia, Babylonia, Egypt until, in the summer term, we arrive in Ancient Greece, in time, for the children to take part in the Olympics at Michael Hall School, along with many other Class 5 children.

As the children encountered monotheism and the somewhat distant strict God of the Old Testament in Class 3, they now are given stories of multiple gods and goddesses, some of whom are partly human, even partly animal. This I feel relates well to the children's growing sense of multiplicity and purpose as they move closer to being teenagers.

We have also been grappling with Euclid and his mind-bending definitions that are the foundation of geometry, such as: "A point is that which has no part" and "A line is breadth less length"!

These complexities are left behind for others in the study of Ted Hughes long prose poem: "What is the Truth? whereby God and his son descent to earth to ascertain whether truth can be found in the life and work of a farm by questioning and observing all who live there.

News from Birch

By Sarah Higgins, class teacher

It has so far been a pleasure getting to know the group of children that make up Birch (class 3/4).

They began the year together getting straight into grammar by finding describing words for the Birch Tree – using their senses to help them. Some were more reluctant than others to describe the taste of a birch tree.

The Old Testament creation story enabled the class to take their understanding of language further, and the class worked together to come up with a poem about the elements that God used to create the earth and the human being. The class have since spent some time on finding endless possibilities for combining adjectives with nouns and verbs – acting out unexpected combinations, and have also worked with the idea of opposites in adjectives and verbs with the story of Cain and Abel supporting this exploration.

The nicest thing however has been seeing the children almost filling their numeracy books (with limited instruction) with number blocks and clocks – finding the patterns to each times table. They will begin numeracy the week after Michaelmas whereby they will measure themselves and the environment around them – which should hopefully further their burgeoning excitement of numbers.

Recent Staff Appointments

A warm welcome to the following staff: Caroline May, who has been appointed to the post of School Cleaner; Jack Godfrey, learning support/classroom assistant in Oak (class 1/2); Sarah Higgins, new class teacher for Birch (class 3/4); Jacqui Armour, afternoon care assistant and Kierstan Wakefield, new volunteer member of Personnel team.

Vacancies

French teacher

We are seeking a native French speaker to bring the language and culture into the school. This subject is currently by Mr Nowell (Oak class teacher), but we require an additional member of staff to augment the French language lessons that the school children are currently experiencing. Ideally, the perfect candidate would not only be a

native French speaker, but would be available three mornings a week between 11.30 and 1pm (as this is seen as the optimum time for language lessons in Steiner Schools) for a total of approximately 3-4 teaching hours; however, we are able to be highly flexible for the right person. The pay for this post is £20 per teaching hour, including statutory holiday pay.

Please contact Jacqui Armour (personnel team) for more details about this post, or for a job description and application form.

School management team (voluntary posts)

Under the Associative Leadership structure that the School is working towards, a Management team would normally be appointed annually by the Collegiate. As the Collegiate had not yet formed, the Trustees towards the end of the summer term appointed an interim management team, to support the process of planning and coordination amongst the school support teams until October 2009, by when it was anticipated a Collegiate would be formed.

We are now seeking expressions of interest and applications from teaching or non teaching staff, or others who are able to collectively represent the best medium-term and short-term interests of the whole school community. The appointment of a management team will be a priority task for the Collegiate, which is currently under formation.

If you would like more information about this position please get in touch with Kiersten Wakefield (personnel team) who will be pleased to help. You may get Kiersten's contact details from Carol on reception. Closing date for applications 31st October 2009.

From tiny seeds

By Jeremy Nowell, Class teacher (Oak)

The oak is the favourite tree of many, yet no two oaks are alike. Straight and tall, short and wide, abundant or sparse, each has its own character, anchoring itself between earth and sky according to its whim and its circumstances. If we had to characterise an oak, we might use words such as 'solid' or 'strong' or 'majestic.' These are phlegmatic souls, doing what they do with quiet dignity, bearing witness to the coming and going of earth's creatures, its storms, its droughts, its relentless continuity.

I like to think of a tree as fulfilling a deep need

within the relationship between earth and sun. It is like a cosmic spider's web, catching and absorbing light that would otherwise slip past unnoticed into the vastness of space. The beauty of a tree lies, perhaps, in the way it expresses this connection between the earth and the sun. We might think of human beings in a similar way. Our own connection to light, however we might describe that, relates to the essence of who we are. When that connection is made manifest in the world, only beautiful things happen. One of the most uplifting observations that Rudolf Steiner makes is that, when experiencing freedom in its true sense, a human being cannot *help* but act morally and for the benefit of the wider world.

Perhaps this is the real joy of contemplating a great oak tree: it is free, within itself, to do what it is meant to do, and it does it for the benefit of all. It is essentially a 'moral' being. It is free to express itself because it is a vessel for the movement of light into the world.

Such is a Class One child when she first comes into her new classroom. Her connection to light is unimpaired, unhindered. Her purpose in life, at this stage, is simple, like that of an oak: to simply be, to be a child, to express the joy of this connection through play. We should not be in too much of a hurry to interfere with this. As teachers we are not there to decide what kind of oak tree this acorn will produce: we can trust that that is, to a very great extent, already written into the fabric of the acorn. We are the waterers and feeders - Tolkien's Ents, perhaps. Slowly the children find a way to anchor the light they absorb in the fertile soil of their own souls, and the soul food we provide in the first years of lower school comes largely from the fairy tale. Fairy tales stir the deepest waters of our being and draw on a wisdom that goes back into the most distant mists of time. Our souls are shaped almost entirely by what we absorb unconsciously, by what acts on them at this deepest level. This level of soul can only be reached imaginatively, primarily through stories and fairy tales. Which is why television has such a devastating impact on young children. I experience the effect as a hardened crust over a child's soul, making it very difficult to reach into those deeper levels that are crying out for nourishment.

The First Three Years of Life

An inspiring series of one-day workshops based on the insights of Rudolf Steiner, for parents, parent & child group leaders, child minders, childcare

providers and playgroup leaders, held in London September 2009-June 2010:

September 26 - The Sacred in everyday life and inner work – Why young children need to see adults work. Why parents & carers need creative outlets. Practising domestic, creative and social arts in the home, in child care and Parent & Child group settings. Inner spiritual practice.

October 31 – Festivals & special occasions – An inspirational and practical introduction into festivals, special occasions and other community building activities in families and child care settings. Creating a seasonal and festival table.

November 14 – Magical tools – Songs, rhymes, stories and puppetry – The power of puppetry, songs, rhymes and storytelling. How these treasures can be brought into the home, child care and Parent & Child group settings. Songs and rhymes for mealtimes, bedtimes and all transitions. Making simple puppets.

December 12 – Practical aspects of Parent & Child Group work – The importance of Parent & child groups – the examples they set. The practical and inner skills needed to support parenting and the care of the young child.

January 16 – Spiritual insights into the first three years – who are our children who come to us? Where do they come from? Introducing Rudolf Steiner's insights into the physical, cognitive, emotional and spiritual developmental stages of childhood. Parenting & care of the young child as a spiritual journey.

February 27 – Rhythm, repetition and reverence as foundation – the importance of rhythm, repetition and reverence in the care of young children. Yearly, seasonal and daily rhythms and why young children need them. Use of the 3 R's in the family, day care and Parent & Child work. Creative discipline.

March 13 – Protecting the sensory sensitivity of the young child – the 12 senses as outlined by Rudolf Steiner and how they unfold in the young child. The necessity for sensory protection – effects of TV and technology, toys and over-stimulation.

April 10 – Movement, Imitation, learning & play

May 1st – Deep respectful care of the young child

June 12th Foodwise – good nutrition for children

Queries to Sam Greshoff 01227 733668 or sam@greshoff.free-online.co.uk

