

**Information for Kindergarten parents**



**Calder Valley Steiner School – Kindergarten**

**Introduction**

Over the last two decades, a group of people have been working to establish Steiner Waldorf Education in the Calder Valley. We now have a thriving school: A Kindergarten for children aged 3 to 6, Parent and Child groups and classes 2, 3, 4 and 5. At our beautiful home in the Old Sunday school, St. John in the Wilderness in Cragg Vale, Hebden Bridge. We offer Kindergarten education 5 mornings per week, 9:00 am to 1.45 pm, during term time only. We also operate Parent and Child groups in Hebden Bridge. In September 2011, we became officially registered as an Independent School, and are now able to offer a full-time Steiner Waldorf education for children once they leave the kindergarten.

We are a limited company as well as being a registered charity. Our organisation is an association called Calder Valley Steiner Education (which runs Calder Valley Steiner School) which is open to all who support the aims and ideas of Steiner Education. All Parents and friends are members of the association, CVSE.

Each parent will find their own way of meeting the approach we are offering. In the kindergartens, we provide a secure caring homely environment where your child can grow through play, rhythm and imitation. We provide quality toys and materials allowing the children to develop physical and social skills and creative impulses, as well as using their imagination and fantasy to form the foundations for a healthy adult life.

We hope you will find support and encouragement here and that your child will find a bridge between home and the world beyond. You will certainly find that many others share our aspirations, and together we form a worldwide fellowship through the Steiner Waldorf school’s movement.

We hope that both you and your child will make new friends.

**WELCOME!**

**About the Kindergarten**

In the Kindergarten we aim to create a beautiful space, which the children grow to love, and a peaceful time to learn through imaginative play and practical activities. We seek to enable the children to unfold in a world free of adult abstraction and the pressure of so-called “early learning”. Each child is given the opportunity to develop the strength and confidence that comes from imaginative thinking. Practical and artistic skills and belonging to a happy community. We find that children leaving the kindergarten at age six, are thoroughly prepared for learning the more intellectual skills of writing and reading when they go to school (in Steiner Schools, as in most continental countries, this is at the age of 6 or 7).

The Kindergarten teacher arranges the surroundings so that they are conductive to “real” play. Why do we provide such simple toys made of natural materials and things gathered from nature – wood, stones, shells and coloured cloths? It is because all these can be endlessly transformed by the children into new scenes and games. Kindergarten age children (age 3 to 6) are so sensitive that they will absorb and imitate all that they experience. The kindergarten teacher continually works positively with the young children’s love of imitation, so that every aspect of the child’s growth and development is nourished. Indeed, Rudolf Steiner, who gave so much wise guidance to teachers and parents, and whose Anthroposophy is at the heart of our work, pointed out that the moral sense of the future adult, is nourished by these early experiences. Just as we can nourish the growing children spiritually and physically by providing appropriate surroundings, stories and activities, so too, we can strengthen them further by bringing rhythm and order into the activities of each morning, week and season throughout the year.

**Free Entitlements, Voluntary Contributions and lunch monies**

We are an accredited setting and therefore eligible for the Early Education Funding for 3- and 4-year olds. All 3- and 4-year olds are entitled to this from the beginning of the term after their 3rd birthday until the term after their 5th birthday. In addition, we offer a range of discounts on fees for siblings who also attend the school.

We recommend that your child starts on three days and build up their days as their confidence grows.

After their fifth birthday the fees will be applicable. Please ask at the office or check the website for up to date fee information.

**Lunch monies.** Lunch monies are charged at a rate of £1.50 per day. This is worked out and split over 12 monthly equal payments. Please ask at the office or check the website for up to date fee information.

We are open term time only and our term dates are available on our website.

**For full details, see the separate document: 'Calder Valley Steiner School Funding Structure. Free Entitlements, Contributions and Fees'**

**The Steiner Waldorf teaching method**

During the Kindergarten years (ages 3-6), the child learns mainly through play and imitation. Play is vital to a child’s healthy development and to establishing the best possible grounding for formal learning in Class 1. During this early phase of a child’s education, the primary tasks of a Steiner education are to provide an environment in which good habits of behaviour, such as memory, reverence, orderliness, listening and enjoyment of the natural world can be established.

The young child’s innate sense of wonder is nurtured throughout their time at Kindergarten, alongside trust and co-operation. Three of the principal pillars of the Steiner kindergarten by which the kindergarten teacher achieves this are:

* the establishment of good rhythm throughout the day, week and year
* repetition, by which the child has the chance to learn through imitation
* reverence, by which the child establishes for themselves a secure and trust-filled place in the world.

*“The small child exerts unconscious energies never again equalled. He/she is a being of will and imitation, identifying himself with each gesture, intonation, mood and thought in his environment, and making these his own free activity of creative, imitative play. He is engaged in the great task of shaping and transforming his inheritance to individual and specific use. To divert these formative energies from their task in these early years is to weaken the vitality, undermine the health, and take from the developing child the endurance and strength he will need in adult life. Premature demands upon the intellect, sharp criticism, undue excitement of fantasy – as by television – and over stimulation of the senses combine to rob the child of his native physical resources.”*

Henry Barnes and Nick Lyons,

***Education as an Art: The Rudolf Steiner Method***

**The “Outside Day”**

Every Kindergarten day, whatever the weather, will include at least some period spent outside, either free play in the garden, a walk, or when the weather is fine, perhaps also story time in the Willow Den. However, for a number of years now we have also scheduled into the week a full 'Outside Day', where the children spend the great majority of the day outside, whatever the weather (in very cold or wet weather, the time outside may be shortened, but the children always go out appropriately dressed). The usual destination for our Outside Days is a beautiful area of woodland belonging to Swan Bank Farm, a 40-minute walk from the school. There we have our own purpose-built shelter which allows us to stay dry in even the wettest of weather. During the day, the children may see some of the animals on the farm, have time in the woods, collect firewood, help build a fire, and have their lunch cooked on an open fire. As with any other Kindergarten day, there will always be a balance of free play, specific tasks and listening and participation in songs and stories.

However, Swan Bank Farm is a stiff 40-minute walk up the hill from the Kindergarten. In our experience, this walk has proved too much for the three-year old, and so we recommend that children join the Outside Day when they are four and over. If you would like further guidance, please talk with the Kindergarten teacher.

**The Importance of Rhythm in the Kindergarten**

Everything we do in the Early Years (and indeed throughout the school) is embedded in rhythm. This is because we know that rhythm brings strength to all types of growth and development. In the natural world this is self-evident, but it can also be experienced by any human being. For example, walking up a steep hill or mountainside becomes so much easier once we establish a rhythm. When learning a musical instrument, we find improvement in our skill comes with regular repeated practice. Our whole digestive system is maintained in a healthy way by a rhythm of absorption and excretion.

We all know how young children love rhythm and how they thrive from an appropriate rhythm of eating and sleeping. So, our pedagogy is embedded in bringing to the children a healthy rhythm of activity and rest which is repeated each day. Even though there are different activities on the days of the week this becomes a rhythm in itself (e.g. Tuesday painting, Wednesday baking etc.) which is immersed in the breathing rhythm of play, ring time, outside time and story time. All of this helps to build strong healthy bodies and socially coherent groups. The children gain more and more stamina for both mental and physical activity. They begin to own the space which is their classroom and feel completely at home so that they can unfold their imaginative faculties unhindered in relationship with one another.

Not only is this important for the young child in the here-and-now, but in also establishing a strong, healthy, resilient foundation which will come into its own when formal school begins. The children will have the strength to meet challenges and not give in however difficult something may be. Indeed, for all of life resilience and determination are absolutely key qualities.

We know as adults how tiring it is if we are doing, say, 3 different jobs in 3 different places with no real opportunity to establish ourselves in one place and one social group. A child attending Kindergarten for only a couple of days during the week will be slightly outside the group dynamic which has grown amongst the children who have been together all week. They will be on the periphery, as it were (just as we would be as adults in a similar social situation) and it takes time and energy to forge a way in only to find there is another gap of time before we are all together with our friends again. It is true that some children deal with this better than others, but deep meaningful involvement in an activity with our peers is so important. For example, for the older child of 5 or 6 whose play is now carried on more in the realm of ideas which might carry on over days, there will be frustration (conscious or unconscious) at lack of continuity and opportunity to really explore imaginatively with friends.

These are the principles behind our recommendations that children attend kindergarten for at least 3 days per week; ideally 5 as their stamina increases.

 We live in a fragmented world where we are all called upon to involve ourselves in a myriad of different activities and social groups. That is how the world is and we can indeed feel that we are only touching the surface of so much that we do, with no time for real, deep experience. However, our resilience and ability to manage this without burnout depends upon our inner bodily and emotional strength. This is why we are so concerned with enabling the child to develop and bringing rhythm and an experience of wholeness into their lives in the way described is fundamental to unfolding these capacities for life.

**The question of religion in Calder Valley Steiner School,**

**and in Steiner Waldorf Schools generally**

Calder Valley Steiner School, like other Early Years centres, schools and organisations of the Steiner Waldorf Schools movement, offers a wide and varied curriculum that aims to address the human potential of each child, practically, socially and academically, as well as morally and spiritually. The teaching methods and ethos of our school thus includes a *religious dimension* via the celebration of seasonal, religious or cultural festivals (frequently in the form of activities for all those involved in the school community), supported throughout the year by age-appropriate stories, verses and imagery within the classroom and school as a whole. In the UK, Christian tradition provides a background for this religious dimension. The expression of this, however, is non-denominational and non-sectarian. Steiner Waldorf educators worldwide work with principles and an educational philosophy that recognises key qualities of reverence towards the spiritual, respect for human beings and responsibility towards the natural world. These qualities are present both within the kindergarten and the first years of more formal education within the school. The Religion Lesson, as a subject lesson in its own right, begins only in Class 3, where the focus is often on the importance of moral values, perseverance in the face of adversity, and the biographies of specific individuals. Thus, both religious education and the more general religious aspect of school life can support the religious and cultural forms children derive from their families and communities (whether Christian or other), while providing them with the means to make individual, mature choices as they grow towards adulthood. During their Kindergarten experience they will develop an understanding of British Values. Within this, individual teachers will then make their own decisions as to what they think is appropriate and nurturing for their particular class. If you have any questions regarding this aspect of the education, please feel free to discuss them with the Class or Kindergarten Teacher.

**Parent and Child Groups**

For many Parents, their first contact with the school and Steiner Education is through Calder Valley Steiner Parent and Child Groups. These meet between 10am and 12am, Monday-Thursday at the Rudolf Steiner centre, Machpelah Works, Station Road, Hebden Bridge. Machpelah Works is the small mill sandwiched between the main Halifax Road and the canal, adjacent to the road leading to the train station. Use the door by the pelican crossing.

For further details, contact Sally Wilson on 07904 052 816

**Parking and Public Transport**

**Parking**. Please do not park or drop children off in the lane at the entrance to the school. The lane is not owned by the school, it is a private lane. The farmers need a wide space and we need to respect that some local residents don’t want traffic, even by the entrance of the lane.

**Dropping off,** and collecting from school. You may park in the Hinchliffe Arms pub car park for 10 -20 minutes from dropping off or collecting.

**Parking generally**. Parking is best at the far side of the Hinchliffe arms pub. Do not park in the pub car park except for dropping off or collecting – see above (unless you’ve arranged it with the pub yourselves).

**Parking for Festivals and other events**. As much as possible please park at the top of the hill, before turning down towards the school – on the left just above the houses / opposite the bus stop.

**Public Transport**. There is a public bus connection to Church Lane in Cragg Vale. The C-Bus and 900 to Huddersfield run hourly from Albert Street in Hebden Bridge.

**Kindergarten bus.** There is a Kindergarten bus that is available for children to travel on that picks up in Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd. There is a parent rota for this service to ensure there is always a parent travelling on the bus, this is coordinated by a parent.

## What to bring for your child

**All year:** Slippers, plimsolls or soft indoor shoes. Waterproofs and wellies. A spare set of pants, socks and “bottoms”, e.g. trousers or leggings/tights.

**Winter:**  Warm outdoor clothes, wellington boots, hats, gloves.
**Summer:** Sunhats and sun cream.

## Dress Code

It is important that children wear warm clothes appropriate to the time of year. It is especially important that they are kept warm around their middle (e.g. they are well 'tucked in'). As regards children’s clothing generally, we encourage parents to ask themselves what encourages good social relations and healthy development? We request that children do not wear clothes that are dominated by logos. These can be frightening or off-putting or simply playing into the hands of the clothing industry by creating demand for their brand as early as possible in children’s lives. Please choose clothing that is suitable (i.e. warm enough for our outside time) and pleasant for everyone else to look at (monster images really do have an impact on behaviour!)

## Sickness

Please do not bring your child if they are unwell, and allow 24 hours to pass after a high temperature, diarrhoea or vomiting have abated before they come back to the Kindergarten. If in doubt please check with the staff. Please ensure you notify the Kindergarten teacher or the school office before 9am if your child is going to be absent from school.

## Accidents

Minor accidents are dealt with in the Kindergarten. Accidents are recorded and parents informed of the measures taken to ensure the well-being of the child. All staff have paediatric first aid training.

## Some more formal things

## Parental Responsibility

Under the Education Act 1996/Children’s Act 1989, the teachers need to be aware of changes in the status between parents/carers and who is responsible on a day-to-day basis for each child. We therefore ask to be kept informed of any changes in the home situation of the child.

## Staff

The school has a Manager and an administration assistant, 3 members of Kindergarten staff, including assistants. There are also 8 members of staff including teachers and assistants in the school, and a Parent and Child Leader. The teaching staff are trained as Steiner Waldorf teachers. They undertake other on-going training and keep up to date with courses on subjects such as paediatric First Aid and Health and Safety, Multiculturalism, Safeguarding Children and children with additional needs.

## Monitoring Children's Progress

We pay careful attention to each child's progress in order to be aware of his or her needs and provide continuous support whilst they are with us. We are always available to discuss any concerns that you may have about your child. Confidential records are kept noting observations of each child in various situations (no tests are carried out). The assessment methods and criteria reflect the philosophy and educational approach of Steiner Waldorf education. These are available to parents to discuss at any time with the teacher. All parents will receive a full end-of-year report, a portfolio of the child’s work and parents’ evenings are held each term.

**Parents Participation and Support**

There is a yearly calendar with all the term dates, as well as dates of major festivals and other events. This is available from the website. Parents are always encouraged to attend these. Some events are for the school only, but many events such as our Advent and Summer Fairs, are major events that are both fundraisers for the school, and important ways in which we make ourselves known to the wider community.

For those wishing to deepen their understanding of all which lies behind this way of working, we also organise talks on various subjects relating to childhood. We occasionally perform Puppet Plays and have craft sessions for both pleasure and fundraising.

**Library**. We have a small number of books on Steiner Education, crafts, seasonal activities, child health, etc to loan out. These are kept in the school office.

There is a weekly parents e-newsletter detailing all these events and other news. We also have a Notice Board with information and dates for your diary. We hope that we can grow as a community around this work providing a strengthening experience for the children and for each other.

**Parental contribution**

As a school we aim to keep our fees as affordable as possible to allow as many children from many walks of life to attend. This does mean however, that we require the support of parents in the upkeep of the school and fundraising.

**Cleaning.** The cleaning of the building is maintained Monday-Thursday by a housekeeper. However, on a Friday parents are required to take it in turns to clean an area in the school. This helps to keep costs low and also ensures parents are part of the team that keeps the school looking beautiful and clean for their children.

The cleaning rota can be found on the school weekly newsletter.

**Fundraising.** Fundraising is an essential part of generating income to enable us to keep school fees low, and we ask that all parents give their time to contribute to fundraising events that happen throughout the year.

**General upkeep/maintenance.** There are times throughout the year that the building may need some general maintenance i.e. a lick of paint or gardening. We also have a work week during the 6-week break, this is a time when we prepare the building for the start of the new term in September.

During this week, we ask that all parents contribute their time and their skills to ensure that the building is at its best for the start of the new year so children can learn in a beautiful environment.

**PTA.** This is a group that any parent can join and be part of the more help the better.

\*If you have any skills to offer that would be beneficial to the school please let either the Kindergarten teacher or the office know

## Parental Support in the home

In keeping with our philosophy of supporting positive behaviour, we ask that parents agree to support us by considering the appropriateness of toys and clothing available to your child. Ready-made plastic toys, for example those depicting TV characters, tend to produce a more rigid thinking in a child because they cannot readily be transformed into anything else. Electronic games, weapons, cartoon or superhero images and their actions are not considered helpful in social integration and may work actively against what we are doing in the Kindergarten. We ask parents to support us in this attitude, not in a dogmatic way, but perhaps beginning to think about the effects of TV and toys.

We acknowledge that all children learn from their environment through the sense impressions they receive from their imitation of what they experience around them. We feel that watching television is not an appropriate experience for the kindergarten aged child. It does not encourage meaningful movement, nourish a child's need for a variety of rich sense impressions, or provide appropriate role models. At an age when play is all-important, it restricts the child's life experiences, some of which may be irreplaceable. We find that television does not support positive behaviour in the Kindergarten and ask for your thoughtful consideration.

We prefer children not to bring toys from home or, if they do, to put them in a special basket in the Kindergarten where they will be carefully looked after by a little gnome.

# Guidelines for Supporting Positive Behaviour in The Kindergarten

All children learn and grow in their understanding of socially appropriate and desirable behaviour. In the kindergarten the teachers continually work with social behaviour by endeavouring to be role models worthy of imitation. The variety and sequencing of our daily activities build a rhythm into our mornings that provides a comfortable knowing of what to expect that further contributes to our intention to support positive behaviour.

As children work and play, the teachers will always seek to encourage reverence, respect and care of self, others, and the environment. However, most children experience some social difficulties at some time in their development and each situation is unique. There are many ways the teachers will help children to integrate better into the Kindergarten group. They might:

1. Redirect the child to a new focus or activity.

2. Gain the child's attention with a look, gesture or word to make him or her aware of their observations.

3. Remove the child from the situation and engage him or her with an adult led task. This stops the inappropriate behaviour, refocuses the child's attention, and enables them to calm down. When appropriate the child returns to the group.

4. If the disruption continues, the child may be kept inside for a short time to help tidy or prepare for story while the others go out to play. After a while they may join the others outside.

5. If the child is disruptive, for example during story time, on several days and the above steps have not been helpful, the parent will be asked to attend on the next day. If during the next story time the child is still disruptive, the parent will be there to take her home, and she will miss story. This may continue until the child stops disrupting the story time.

If the behaviour of a child requires more attention than can be achieved by the daily efforts described above, other means may be implemented to ensure the most positive Kindergarten experience for the child, classmates, and group as a whole. Approaches for consideration when behaviour of a child is disruptive and/or there is a cause for general concern, might be:

1. Parent notification.

2. Teacher review on a regular basis (daily and/or weekly).

3. Discussion with parents, teachers and child where appropriate.

4. Begin a 'child study' in weekly College of Teachers meetings.

5. Implementation of an action plan to target a particular problem or concern.

6. Recommendation to consult with other professionals for help and support.

Each new child comes to the Kindergarten on the basis of half a term’s trial. If at the end of this time the child has not settled, they may be asked to leave. It is also possible that a half term’s trial may be extended if the teachers deem it appropriate. If the child has been at the kindergarten longer and a problem arises, every effort will be made with parent support to reintegrate the child into the group. However, if necessary, the child may be asked to leave.

**Other Information**

## Equal Opportunities Statement

Our School recognises and has regard for each child's religious persuasion, ethnic origins and cultural and linguistic background, so that each child is valued as an individual without racial or gender stereotyping. Our children will be helped to develop positive self-identity and to value and accept all cultural and ethnic groups through our resources and activities such as celebrating festivals from different cultures and learning about British Values.

## Grievance procedure

In the event of a complaint by a parent or member of staff please contact the teacher or one of the trustees. All complaints will be treated in confidence. Names and addresses of the trustees and the OFSTED Department to which we are responsible are displayed on the notice board in the kindergarten and below.

Our full Complaints Policy and Procedure is available for inspection in the school office.

## Contacting the School

Individual teachers are available to speak to parents at Kindergarten between 2.00pm and 6.00pm each weekday either on their mobile phone or in person by arrangement. We are careful to avoid discussing children within their hearing!

The **School** telephone number is **01422 882071**.
This number is not always staffed, but you can leave a message.

**Applications should be made to the School’s Manager, Kate Lunn.**

The school’s postal address is:
**Calder valley Steiner School,**

**Church Bank Lane,**

**Cragg Vale,**

**Halifax HX7 5TF**

You can also email the school at **caldersteiner@gmail.com** or via the website [**www.caldersteiner.org.uk**](http://www.caldersteiner.org.uk) which has lots of information for parents and prospective parents

**Other Contact Details**

**Trustees**

Marilyn Edwards: 01422 885249

Richard Bunzl: 01422 846867

Rory O’Neill: 07828173057

**Safeguarding Lead & Online Safety Lead**

Kate Lunn

The welfare and safety of the children is paramount for the school. If you have any questions or queries, please contact Kate.

### OFSTED

### Our Dept. of Education School Registration number is: 381/6002

### Ofsted may be contacted at:

### Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, MANCHESTER, M1 2WD

## Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship

We are an Independent School and a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, which represents Steiner Waldorf Education in the UK and Ireland. The Council of the Fellowship consists of representatives from each of the established member schools and is in contact with schools such as ours.
**www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk**

Visitors, students, volunteers and helpers

Visitors are always welcome to visit the school. Please arrange this with Kate Lunn, our School Manager. There is a visitor signing in book by the main entrance. We welcome Steiner students who want to visit us for work experience. We also welcome visits from local teachers and educators.

**Anthroposophical Study Group**

An Anthroposophical study group meets weekly to study the ideas of Rudolf Steiner. Meetings are on Wednesday evenings at the Steiner Centre, Machpelah Works at 8.00pm.

Contact: Richard Bunzl on 01422 846867

\*If you would like further information or explanation about Waldorf education, please ask at the office and we will be happy to provide you with further reading.

 

 **2018**