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| CVSE Curriculum Classes 1-3(including Kindergarten and Calder Valley Steiner school curriculum document) |
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CALDER VALLEY STEINER EDUCATION

### CURRICULUM DOCUMENT

**§ Introduction.** *Calder Valley Steiner School* is one of more than one thousand schools across more than sixty countries teaching children through the educational principles first established by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Steiner Education (also known as Waldorf Education[[1]](#endnote-1)) and the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum grow out of Rudolf Steiner’s insights into the nature of the human being, and specifically the growing child in their developing relationship to the world. The essential aim of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum is to establish good rhythm and balance in all aspects of the child's development. The curriculum, and the teaching methods which flow from it, take account of the growing child's physical and emotional (feeling) needs, as well as their intellectual needs. Every aspect of the teaching, whatever the subject, aims to balance these needs at each stage of the child's development. The Steiner Waldorf curriculum provides the child with educational challenges at such a time that they can meet them in a way that their interest in the actual process of learning (whatever the subject) is continually renewed. It is the task of the Steiner Waldorf teacher to foster this positive relationship to learning across all subjects, thereby laying the foundations for life-long learning. The core text, "The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum" (2005, revised 2014) [in future referred to as ETCSWC] states that 'the Waldorf Curriculum has a fundamentally therapeutic task in that it enables and supports the healthy development of the whole person. Health in this sense means a dynamic balance of the forces within the child and that the individual can relate to other people and the world in a balanced way. It also means that the realization of each child's potential is fostered in an optimal way.' [p. 7.]

• The aim of Calder Valley Steiner Education is to deliver high quality education in a nurturing environment based on Steiner Waldorf principles. The School provides an infant and primary education following Steiner-Waldorf education principles, with some adaptations where necessary to prepare children for transition to Secondary School outside the Steiner-Waldorf system. The School also adapts where necessary the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and teaching methods to local requirements of diversity, ethnicity and the school's local setting and heritage.

**§ Teaching Methods. The Steiner Waldorf teaching method.**

• Ages 3-6. During these kindergarten years, 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. 'In the Early Years phase the task of education is 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.' [ETCSWC, p. 16.] The young child’s inate sense of wonder is nurtured throughout their time at kindergarten, alongside trust and co-operation. Three of the principal pillars of the Steiner Waldorf 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; and *reverence*, by which the child establishes for themselves a secure and trust-filled place in the world.

• Ages 6-8. The Steiner Waldorf method for school-age children is characterized by whole-class teaching (which from the child's perspective equates to whole-class learning). A mixed ability class gives opportunities for children to improve and exercise their social skills through helping, and being helped by others, as well as through listening and communicating to the class as a whole. 'A class of mixed ability children is a model for community.' (ETCSWC, p. 21.) Extra help for individual pupils in specific subjects is always an option. However, whenever differentiation is called for (such as in numeracy or literacy), new material is generally presented to the class as a whole, which may then divide into groups, but which are re-integrated into the whole at the end of the lesson.

• Special Educational Needs. Because of its gentle, child-centred approach, Steiner Waldorf education is suited to many children with special educational challenges. Steiner Waldorf Schools have been delivering all ability teaching since their inception; alongside which they have developed many complementary ways of helping individual children, both within the whole class and through special lessons. Although a small school, we seek to make provision for children of all abilities within the school's educational ethos and curriculum.

• Any one class continues to have the same Class Teacher for all core subjects over a period of years (usually between 5 and 6 years). 'The class teacher provides a focus for the class and continuity over many years of development. He or she aims to be a figure of moral authority based on commitment, care for the children and a close relationship with the parents.' [ETCSWC, p. 19.] Specialist subject teachers are employed as appropriate.

**§ Structure of the School Day.**

Each day begins with a two hour lesson delivered by the Class Teacher. This so-called Main Lesson or Morning Lesson is an essential feature of the Steiner teaching method, and includes: 'activities to awaken and focus the child's attention, oral and written practice of basic skills, mental arithmetic, music and drawing, presentation of new material, recall and discussion of previous day's (or earlier) work, individual working, conversation, narrative and practical work.' [ETCSWC, p. 19] The focus of the main lesson changes every 3-4 weeks, and 'embraces and addresses a varied and progressive range of skills, competencies and faculties in mathematics, English, the arts, science and humanities. Each day's main-lesson is viewed as an integrated and organic whole. Meaningful connections are made across subject areas and between main-lesson themes.' [ETCSWC, p. 20.]

**§ Classes 1-3 Curriculum Content.**

Calder Valley Steiner School follows the age-related curriculum as laid out in ETCSWC and other relevant publications, with adaptations to local requirements of diversity and specifics of the setting. (Please note that in a Steiner-Waldorf context, Class 1 refers to children aged 6/7, with the proceeding classes following in yearly steps thereafter.) From Class 1 onwards, 'formal' methods of teaching in core subjects are introduced.

**Numeracy**

• From Class 1, in order to be able to handle quantitative numbers freely, an “inner” numerical space needs to be created, in which the child learns to move, rhythmically at first, with varied number patterns. This is achieved, amongst other means, by a memory developed by learning the times-tables through rhythmic movement e.g. through clapping, passing bean bags or skipping. The whole numbers are introduced followed by the four basic arithmetical functions. Other forms of number notation, such as Roman Numerals, are also studied. Wherever possible, the teacher introduces new mathematical concepts by beginning first with the *whole*, and then moving to the *parts*. The interrelatedness of arithmetical functions is emphasised. Recitation involving counting, times-tables and number bonds is encouraged. All arithmetical functions are dealt with in a pictorial and/or practical way, including number lines, place value and pattern recognition. Where appropriate, arithmetical functions are translated into physical movement for the children. During Class 2, there is a move towards more arithmetical problem solving and mental arithmetic. The children will begin to handle larger numbers and number bonds, along with new mathematical concepts such as odd and even. During Class 3, the children work practically with weights, measures, money and time.

etcswc (see p. 109) makes the following suggestions of content for numeracy in Classes 1-3:

**Class 1:**

* Countint up to 110.
* Learning up to the 7 times table by heart and through rhythmic practice
* Introducing the four rules using numbers up to 20 and also in written form (in notation, the sum is written first: 7 is 3+4).
* Number riddles.
* First exercises in mental arithmetic.

**Class 2:**

* Further practice in mental arithmetic.
* Extension of counting and practice of the four rules using numbers up to 100.
* Practice in combined calculation.
* Initial consideration of number connections (e.g. even and odd numbers, primes).
* Up to the 12 times table by heart.
* Representation of tables in drawing.
* Written analytically synthetically practised calculations.
* Calculations should be reversed (3+4=7).

**Class 3:**

* Mental arithmetic.
* Sums using numbers up to 1,020 or 1,100.
* Written addition and subtraction using several places (place value).
* Written multiplication using two place values.
* Written division using units as divisor.
* Up to 15 times tables; 10 times table up to 900.
* Square numbers by heart as a sequence.
* Weights and measures (practical subject) and calculations with simple practical problems.

• **English**.

• English written language: From Class 1, the letters of alphabet are introduced, often in a pictorial way, with emphasis on quality of spoken sound as well as writing. Copying of the teacher's written examples is encouraged. The content of the written work will relate to the theme of the main lesson. From Class 2, the children proceed from capital letters to lower case cursive handwriting. They compose more of their own written work, as well as copying from the board or writing down dictated texts. During Class 3, children will be expected to write longer and more complex pieces.

• Reading: this grows out of writing beginning in Class 1. 'An integrated combination of whole word, phonic and contextual methods is used to develop reading, though with an emphasis on whole sentences/whole phrases.' [ETCSWC, p. 38.] In Class 2, reading skills are developed, using familiar word families as well as introducing new words and vowel and consonant combinations. A differentiated approach to reading may be used from Class 2, including whole class reading, child to child reading and child to adult reading. By Class 3, 'reading progresses to a differentiation of material for different purposes, including understanding instructions and tasks, finding information and reading timetables. Reading aloud is practised with an awareness of content and punctuation. Children are directed to a wide range of reading material according to ability.' [ETCSWC, pp. 38-9.] Formal study of grammar begins in Class 3.

• Spoken language, the learning by heart and speaking of child-specific poems, through to whole-class recitation, is a core ingredient of the Steiner-Waldorf approach.

**Form Drawing**.

From Class 1, children learn to draw regular forms made of curves and straight lines, beginning with simple straight and curved wave forms, eventually leading to more complex over-and-under knot forms. This activity is seen as an excellent preliminary to writing, engenders good balance in all aspects of the developing child, and is an important aid to establishing good habits in concentration.

**Class 1.**

Straight lines and curves are the starting points of form drawing. Children experience the the difference in quality between straight lines and curves through drawing them, having explored their character through bodily movement. Straight and curved lines are practised in alternation, in different sizes and in a variety of forms. These may include:

* Exercises with vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines, with angles (acute and obtuse), star shapes, triangles, squares and other regular-sided shapes.
* Exercises with convex and concave curves, waves, circles, ellipses, spirals, figures-of-eight and so on.
* Continuous patterns and sequences as a preparation for cursive writing.

**Class 2.**

Building on previous exercises, the idea of mirror symmetry is introduced. This may include:

* Exercises around a vertical central axis (which can also be there in the imagination) mirroring curved and straight and curved forms. Symmetry and reflections.
* Similar exercises with a horizontal axis.
* Exercises around a diagonal axis.
* Running and rhythmical forms.

**Class 3.**

Having practised axial symmetry, the children can now work on free ‘asymmetrical’ symmetries (e.g. spiral forms). The patterns learned can be applied to illustrating (e.g. lettering for title pages) and to handwork (e.g. embroidery). Exercises may include:

* Spirals and forms which overlap, coil and intertwine.
* Forms based on triangles, squares, pentagons, etc.
* Four-fold symmetries, i.e. forms combining horizontal, vertical and diametrical symmetries.
* Practising ‘balanced’ forms.

**Foreign language teaching**

At least one modern European language is taught from Class 1 onwards. This is currently Spanish. During the early years, the emphasis is on spoken language (especially rhymes and songs), and good listening.

**History and other humanities**

History and other humanities are taught as part of the main-lesson programme. In Class 1, stories include traditional fairy tales and folk tales, as well as stories which illustrate the cycle of the seasons. In Class 2, children are introduced to more nature stories and fables, as well as stories from the lives of saints and other individuals. In Class 3, stories will include those connected with farming, gardening and building, as well stories from the Old Testament, including Genesis and other creation stories.

**Visual Art**

Painting and drawing are taught both as subjects in their own right, and as part of main-lesson work, whereby an artistic approach can be brought into all subjects. The use of natural pigment primary colour water-colours on wet paper is the preferred medium for painting. Wax crayons are generally used for drawing. Basic painting and drawing techniques are introduced, along with care and respect for the materials.

**For more detail see the Drawing, Modelling and Painting curriculums.**

**Music**

Singing and instrumental work (notably pentatonic flute, and instrumental improvisation) will be taught both as subjects in their own right, and as part of main-lesson work, whereby a musical dimension can be brought to all subjects.

**Handwork**

Knitting and needlework are taught from Class 1 onwards. This element of the Steiner-Waldorf curriculum is important for the development of co-ordination for both hands, concentration, practical number work in a creative context, and the fostering of an appreciation of the work behind common manufactured objects. Sewing (including embroidery) is also introduced. Children make useful (e.g. pencil case or flute bag) as well as beautiful objects.

**For more detail see the Handwork Curriculum.**

**Movement, physical activity and out-door pursuits**

Physical movement is a core aspect of the Steiner-Waldorf approach. It is an integral part of the main-lesson, whereby a physical-movement aspect can be brought to all subjects. The movement art of eurhythmy is taught in many Steiner schools subject to the availability of a qualified teacher. Co-operative team games and sports are also taught as subject lessons. Gardening and nature studies are taught from Class 1. Further out-door activities, such as building shelters, appear from Class 3 onwards.

**For more detail see the Outdoor Games curriculum classes 1-6.**

**Information Technology**

Regarding the use of computers in the classroom, the class teacher will make a judgment based on the view that, 'The ultimate aim [of Steiner-Waldorf education] is to equip the students to be able to make judgments for themselves how best to use the computer as a tool in the service of real perceived needs.' [ETCSWC, p. 164.]

**See also: CVSE Class 4 & 5 Curriculum document.**

**For further information on assessment, methods of assessment and programmes of work, see the documents: CVSE Quality of Pupil Learning and Assessment and CVSE Marking, Feedback and Assessment policy.**

1. The word Waldorf comes from the name of the first such school set up in 1919 in the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart. At the request of Emil Molt, the managing director, Rudolf Steiner helped found a school to educate the children of the factory’s workforce. Both “Steiner” and “Waldorf” are terms which have continued to be used interchangeably. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)