

Early Years Handbook



School Year 2021–2022

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WELCOME

‘Our aim is to provide a truly inspirational education where our children develop a love of learning and are prepared to go out into our ever changing world as creative, resourceful and self-confident young people with the life skills to succeed.’

We are delighted that you have chosen to become part of our school community and we offer you a very warm welcome to our Early Years Department.

Whether you are a new family or already familiar with our school we thank you for your commitment to our education.

In the Early Years Department we provide a secure and beautiful, home-like environment for children to grow at their own pace; to learn through imaginative and creative play and to strengthen their physical and social skills as a foundation for a healthy and happy life. We hope that you and your children will make new friends and enjoy being part of our community.

This handbook contains some important information about how the school as a whole and the Early Years Department in particular works. We hope that you will find it informative and inspirational and that it will encourage you to become involved in the many areas of school life where parents/carers make such an important contribution. At the end of this handbook we have included various articles which you may find help you to understand how we work; it is useful to return to them throughout the years as questions arise.

Many thanks,

The EY Team

Background to Cambridge Steiner School

Since 1987, many people have worked together to bring Steiner Waldorf education to the Cambridge area. The first Cambridge Steiner Kindergarten opened its doors in 1994, followed by the opening of our Lower School in 1999. We moved to our own premises in Fulbourn in January 2007 so that Parent and Child groups, Kindergartens and Lower School could all join together. We now have provision from Parent and Child Groups and Kindergartens in the Early Years Department, and up to Class 10 (age 16) in our Upper School.

The Cambridge Steiner School is one of over 900 Steiner Waldorf schools worldwide in over 60 countries. All schools share a curriculum and a teaching method which fosters the child's healthy development and stimulates the child's enthusiasm for learning.

The Cambridge Steiner School endeavours to develop the unique human potential of each individual child. Thus, in our school, there is no discrimination against any person or group of people on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, faith, disability, age, marital status or sexual orientation. This entails equality of opportunity and an appreciation of the diversity of the children, staff and parents/carers (referred to here as 'parents') served by the Cambridge Steiner School.

EARLY YEARS

Our Early Years setting provides flexible educational provision for children from birth to six years of age. This includes:

- Parent and Child Groups for parents/carers and children from 0-3 years of age.
- Buttercups Kindergarten for children from two to four years.
- Elderflower and Rosebud Kindergartens for children aged three to six.



Our kindergartens provide a creative and nurturing learning environment, which also includes weekly visits to the nearby woodlands for the older children.

Kindergarten provision is from 8.30am to 3.00pm. Parents can choose a combination of mornings or full days to best suit their needs and those of their children.

The teachers strive to build a bridge between home and school and to form a connection to each child's family. The education is based on Rudolf Steiner's insights and a deep understanding of child development. Children of this age learn through

imitating the world around them. We aim to provide an example worthy of imitation, and to nurture the child's imagination through providing opportunities for creative play, singing, poetry, stories and puppet plays. The seasonal festivals are an important part of every school year and are celebrated by all the kindergartens and classes throughout the school, and often are shared with family and friends.

Being in nature and experiencing the seasons is an important aspect of our education, therefore all of our kindergartens spend a considerable amount of time outdoors.

LOWER SCHOOL

The children enter Lower School after they turn six years old. Their class teacher aims to accompany them through the eight year journey, providing a secure learning environment. The core of the curriculum is the Main Lesson, typically taught in three-week blocks of two hours each morning. These lessons include topics such as farming, geography, botany, mythology, etc. They are taught in an imaginative, experiential and age-appropriate manner, with the children producing their own written and illustrated books. The class teacher leads the main lessons, which include literacy and numeracy as well as practical and artistic activities such as painting, drawing, modelling, drama and movement, music and gardening.

ADMISSIONS

Our Admissions Policy and Procedure, which is available on our website, describes the full application process and how we ensure that we are accessible, fair and transparent in our handling of applications.



Progression from our Parent and Child groups to Buttercups Kindergarten or one of the mixed-age kindergarten groups requires submission of an admission application (progression is not automatic). Please ensure that you apply in plenty of time if you want to be assured of a place in one of the kindergarten groups.

Once a child is enrolled in Buttercups Kindergarten, they can progress into one of the mixed-age kindergartens and subsequently into the Lower School without a separate application.

THE STEINER IDEAL IN THE EARLY YEARS

By Jani Nicol, Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship

The Austrian philosopher and educator, Rudolf Steiner, wished to create a form of education which would help pupils achieve clarity of thought, sensitivity of feeling and strength of will. After listening to his lectures, the workers at the Waldorf- Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart asked him to form a school for their children, and in 1919 the first Waldorf school was founded. Today, from the favelas in Sao Paulo to the villages of Nepal, there are some 900 schools and 1900 Early Years centres in over 61 countries, serving children from birth to 18 years of age.

The educational philosophy springs from recognition of three seven-year cycles of development; from birth to seven, from seven to fourteen and from fourteen to twenty one. At each stage, the education is designed to work with the unfolding abilities and changing needs of the child. These stages connect with the development of the all-round human qualities of thinking, feeling, and willing. In the first phase, the active or will aspect predominates. In the second, the affective or feeling; and in the third, the cognitive or thinking.

Our approach to not forcing formal learning is borne out of a desire to protect the faculties of feeling and willing, which are so often marginalised in the rush to meet early, and unnecessary, intellectual attainment targets. Children who have suffered from early pressure to learn often lack the will and enthusiasm later to study for themselves. Any education that neglects children's feelings runs the risk of creating emotionally bankrupt adults.

The carefully structured environment is designed to

foster personal and social learning. During the early years we teach by example, and learning is integrated rather than subject-based. Our curriculum aims to adapt itself to the child. This takes time, and the children in our kindergartens are given time to unfold at their own pace.



Young children are gifted players and imitators. These creative faculties, which appear shortly after birth and recede at around seven, are the child's personal pedagogues. The Steiner Waldorf teacher cooperates and works with these powerful educational forces.

Respect for the wisdom of childhood and for the child's unique mode of experiencing and learning is the first step towards affirming the inner child.

Each day in our Kindergartens, time is dedicated to free creative play. Studies demonstrate that good players show more empathy towards others and have less aggression, are able to see things from the perspective of the other, and show less signs of fear, sadness and fatigue. Play also strengthens the imagination. Through play, children are able to exercise and consolidate their ability to understand and think, and to develop and strengthen their concentration. Creative play supports physical, emotional and social development, and allows children to learn through investigation, exploration and discovery. It encourages children to become inventive and adaptable.

We are a community of 'doers' and our work is a combination of practical and artistic activity. We garden, clean and cook. We bake our own bread together and share and eat it at meal-times. Children love to help and develop a wide range of motor skills. The presence of a working adult creates an atmosphere that helps the children to become independently active, and to find their own learning situations through play. To see an adult at work, perhaps in the activity of carving a spoon, in which

care, skill, concentration and perseverance are all demanded, is a wonderful example to the ever-watchful child—a lesson in the sustained application of will-power. Implicit in everything we do, but also in how we do it, is the value base of the teacher. How we handle our tools and materials, even our gestures and body language, are all registered and internalised by the child.

The teacher who sets the example may then have certain expectations of the children. A variety of songs, stories and poems including verses in French, German or other languages are learnt naturally by 'heart' not 'head'. Our children develop good memories, which do not depend on the printed word. The forces of imitation naturally diminish and give way to a new kind of knowing after six years old. Only then, when we feel the children have reached a stage of maturity and are genuinely 'school-ready', do we begin formal instruction.

Children's learning experiences gain meaning by their relevance to life. We provide opportunities for learning which are embedded within the business of daily living. In integrated context, children have a unified experience of the world and are able to gather strength and security from it. Maths in the Waldorf kindergarten might take place at the cooking table where food is being prepared. Thinly sliced carrots make wonderful natural circles, each containing its own tiny 'sun' which appears when held up to the light. The carrot can also be cut, chopped, cubed and counted and has the added value of being able to be eaten later in soup! Maths is encountered not as an abstraction but serving human needs.

In a secure environment, children speak freely and learn to listen to others. We concentrate on the oral tradition by telling many stories. A well-told story creates an appreciation for the human voice and the beauty and rhythms of language. It also helps to extend vocabulary and aids the development of a good memory and a rich imagination. Fairy tales and nature stories address the feeling realm and awaken a fine moral sense. Puppet shows by the teachers and children develop dramatic skills through narrative and dialogue. Children also sing together and take part in eurhythmy—a form of movement, which works with language and music.

Steiner Waldorf kindergartens identify rhythm as an important educational principle. Children need the reassurance of continuity, and regular events punctuate the kindergarten year, week and day.

Seasonal activities celebrate the cycles of the year, and the seasonal area reflects the changing natural world throughout the year - as do the themes of our songs, stories and poems.

Each week has its own regular rhythm of recurring activities: baking day, painting day, craft day.

Every day has its own smaller rhythms. These help the child to feel secure and to know what to expect. A tidy-up song, for example, might signal the end of one activity and the beginning of another. The day is structured so there is a varied pace, with periods of contraction and expansion providing a balance between times of activity and times of rest. Each day has a special time—a quiet moment to experience reverence. Celebrating a variety of festivals together provides an opportunity for rich cultural and religious experiences and involves the wider community.

There is a rhythmic alteration between the child-led time (creative play, outside time) and the teacher-led activity (ring-time, story)—the teacher's time being short at this age. Working with rhythm helps children to live with change, to find their place in the world, and to begin to understand the past, present and future. Attention to rhythm promotes healthy development and leads to a balanced life later.

Repetition also plays a key role in establishing continuity and aids the development of memory, which is strengthened by recurring experiences. Daily, weekly and yearly events are remembered, and eagerly anticipated a second time round. And stories are told not just once, but many times. Repetition brings the opportunity for children to familiarise themselves with the material and to deepen their relationship to it.

The kindergarten is designed to be a warm and friendly place with a home-like environment. We are conscious of the importance of a happy, smooth transition from home to school, and close liaison between parents and teacher is encouraged at all times. Parental involvement is high—many parents already have a good rapport with our staff through our parent and child groups before their child enters kindergarten.

We believe that children whose needs are met, and who are valued and not hurried through their childhood, are more likely to become well-adjusted adults who succeed in life and are able to contribute to society.



OUR EARLY YEARS GROUPS

Parent and Child Group (0 to 3 years)

Parent and Child Group runs on Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 9.30–11.00am. It provides a gentle introduction to the principles of supporting naturally unfolding physical development, respectful care and self-initiated free play in a small, contained and peaceful environment.

The groups provide an opportunity for gaining a deeper understanding of the principles introduced in the Parent and Child Group and brings free-play, snack time, crafts for the adults, and song time supported with the use of song, rhythm and repetition.

Parent and Child group also runs an outdoor session on Fridays at Wandlebury Country Park, Cambridge.

All of these sessions are ideal places to meet other new parents and learn more about Steiner education. All families are warmly welcomed. Please contact the school for more information.

Buttercups Kindergarten (2–4 years)

Buttercups Kindergarten is available from Monday to Thursday, 8.30–3.00pm. Children can attend all four sessions. Buttercups Kindergarten currently provides a gentle start for the younger child in a small group situation, with a high child/adult ratio. Children make their first independent steps in socialising with other children in a beautiful home-like and caring environment.

Elderflower and Rosebud Kindergartens (3-6 years)

Elderflower and Rosebud Kindergartens take children from the age of three up to and including the age of six years. Children can join these groups from September after their third birthday. The mixed-age groups have the advantage that children learn from each other and take care for each other, just like in a family.

These kindergartens are available Monday to Friday, from 8.30–3.00pm. Families may choose a combination of morning and afternoon sessions, picking children up at 3pm.

Children who attend stay in their room and group, with their own teacher and assistant, where they have the opportunity to play and socialise and take part in seasonal activities suited to their age. Most children attend morning and afternoon sessions and many children attend all 5 days. This creates a strong rhythm for the child, includes a calm and replenishing rest time and offers the child meaningful activities on each day.

Children in all the kindergarten groups spend time outside every day in our lovely gardens and get to experience outdoor learning and play. Children need clothing and footwear for outdoor activities; rain or shine. In addition, children in the mixed-age kindergartens have the opportunity to spend one morning each week in the Nature Reserve at Fulbourn Fen, hosted by the Wildlife Trust, developing their relationship to the natural world through play, outdoor activities and stories.

Late Afternoon Care (LAC) 3-5 years)

This group is open to children from Elderflower & Rosebud classes and those who have just turned 3 years old from Buttercup (with parent/teacher consultation).

WOODLAND PROVISION

Our school has operated a very popular and highly-regarded kindergarten Woodland Programme since September 2009. Children from Elderflower and Rosebud Kindergartens spend one day per week in the nearby nature reserve throughout all seasons.

Through the Woodland Programme, children learn responsibility and respect for the natural world. The nature reserve provides a wonderful environment-the perfect place for discovery, creativity and imagination to flourish.



The Woodland Programme starts after the children have settled into their routines after the start of a new school year, which is usually by the end of September. The Woodland day is on a Monday each week (weather and staff ratios permitting).

Parents drop their children off in the car park at the Fulbourn village centre at 8.30am and collect at 3 pm.



The woodland days show a strong rhythm of teacher and child led activities. The group may go for a long walk, stop at familiar places to play, share a hot lunch with each other and listen to woodland stories or create their own puppet shows. The simple props, abundant in nature foster their imagination and foster a deep connection and love for nature.

The teachers take great care to plan the walks and activities so that they suit the ability and needs of the children, as well as the weather conditions. As we move through the year, we visit new parts of the woodland such as the orchard or oak trees.

Woodland weather policy

There are some weather conditions when we would not go to the woodland. This is the case when heavy rain is forecast all morning, when the temperature falls below -4 degrees Celsius and/or high winds are forecast.

The teachers decide if in these cases the group spends the morning or part of it in the kindergarten garden or in a nearby area depending on the severity of the conditions. In this case, we notify you as soon as possible via email.

Please also see our Woodland Inclement Weather Policy.

THE KINDERGARTEN DAY

Young children thrive on a simple, flexible rhythm that carries them through their day, each week and the slowly unfolding years of their lives. They benefit from dependability and regularity throughout childhood.

Rhythm brings reassurance and continuity, as well as trust in the unfolding of life. For young children to be engaged in self-initiated imaginative play, they need to be held in a secure rhythm and warm aesthetic environment without over-stimulation.

The kindergarten day follows a predictable pattern, alternating child-led time with a teacher-led activity. The day emphasises periods of free play, which take place both inside and out, alongside adults doing meaningful activity with which the children are always welcome to join in. Activities like cooking, baking, crafts, gardening, bringing order and beauty, caring for others, washing, drawing, painting and sculpting are all part of kindergarten work. The imitation of care, purpose, dedication and gratitude in these processes is as important as the work that is done.

The day flows with regular and repetitive activity, such as the circle time, which includes songs and rhythmical verses, music and movement. The snack, prepared by adults and children, is shared together. The mood is relaxed and social, and creates a valuable opportunity each day for listening, speaking and sharing. The strong tradition of oral storytelling and puppetry are also an important part of the morning.

A daily rhythm would usually include:

- Circle time: music, speech and movement
- Indoor self-directed creative play
- Domestic and artistic activities: cooking, baking, tidying, handwork, painting, drawing, and seasonal crafts
- Play and movement in nature
- Lunch and snack times
- Story or puppet show

Each kindergarten follows a slightly different rhythm. Please ask your teacher for details.

ATTENDANCE

Children in Buttercups Kindergarten are recommended to attend for either three or four days each week. This ensures that children have the best opportunity to form social relationships and settle into the full rhythm of the kindergarten.

Children in Elderflower and Rosebud Kindergartens can enrol for four or five full days (8.30am–3pm) depending on the needs of your family.

We strongly recommend that children attend for at least four mornings by age four, and by age five the children are expected to attend for five days. The law requires that parents ensure that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education during term time, unless they are being home-schooled for part of the week. Over the last few years we have experienced that when all children attend the full day the rhythm of the day flows more harmoniously without pressure and uncertainty for the children.

STAFF

As parents, you can be assured that your children are well looked after. All our kindergarten teachers are qualified Steiner Waldorf Early Years teachers and fulfil state requirements for early years. They keep up to date with statutory requirements in areas as safeguarding and child protection, first aid, food hygiene, health and safety, equal opportunities, and special needs. We are striving towards all our assistants gaining a professional early years qualification (Steiner Waldorf qualification or NVQ Level 2–4 Early Years).

Our Parent and Child Group Leader has been part of our community for many years and has completed the Holistic Baby & Childcare level 3 training course, integrating Steiner and Pickler approaches and mainstream statutory requirements.

Our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinators (SENCO) works closely with the teachers and parents where necessary.

All of our staff and volunteers are inducted, DBS checked and trained in Safeguarding. They are encouraged and supported by the school to undertake training, attend conferences and further their experience and qualifications.

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND PROGRESS

Initial Child Profile

After your child has been accepted into our school, the teacher will meet with you to discuss your child in more depth. This helps to build up a picture of your child and ensures that we work together with you and find the best ways to meet your child's needs.

Settling into kindergarten

It is essential that children have a positive introduction to kindergarten and, as such, various approaches are used for settling younger children depending on the child and family. As Steiner Waldorf Early Years educators, we respond with warmth and encouragement to the uniqueness of each family situation and, in doing so, emphasise a happy, and smooth transition for the child from home to school. From the onset, teachers work in partnership with parents to achieve the best possible result for each child. Close liaison between parent and teacher is instrumental from the beginning, and continues throughout the child's journey through school.

Parents may find themselves torn by ambivalent feelings. Teachers take the situation and all parental fears and doubts very seriously and work with parents to plan the transition. Gentle separation for young children relies on a sense of trust between the teacher and the parents. If the teacher and parents emanate an air of confidence in moments of transition, experience has taught us that children adjust very quickly to the new situation.

For children who are new to the school, the teachers try to arrange home visits before or at the start of the new term. In addition, the teacher will discuss and agree with the family the best way to introduce the child into the kindergarten. This may include the child spending time with the teacher in the kindergarten (without other children) and could move towards the child having short periods of time in the kindergarten group. All steps should strive towards ensuring the child feels safe and secure within the kindergarten environment.

The teachers will discuss with each parent how best to settle their child, depending on their individual needs.

Appointments

We monitor your child's progress in order to be aware of their needs, providing continuous support whilst at our kindergarten. We are always happy to have a quick chat at the end of the Kindergarten day if there are no other commitments by the teacher. For any longer discussions or concerns, please arrange an appointment. Before school and during the morning conversations with parents are a distraction both for the child and for the teacher. For any urgent questions, please send an email to the teacher or leave a message in our message book next to the kindergarten. We strive to respond as soon as possible.

Communication

Please let us know if your child has been unwell or had a bad night, or if they are going home with another child.

Consultations

The teacher will arrange more formal consultations during the first term and at the end of the school year. In more complex situations, the teachers are happy to meet you at individually arranged times.

Home visits

Class teachers like the opportunity to visit their pupils' homes at a convenient point. This helps to give a more complete picture of each child and helps strengthen the connection between home and school.

Assessments

It is a statutory duty for all practitioners to observe and assess all the children in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This is a requirement regardless of state funding. Through the Steiner Waldorf School Fellowship (SWSF) Steiner Waldorf Early Years settings have successfully applied for exemptions from some aspects of the EYFS which are not in keeping with our educational ethos and practice. The SWSF has worked with Steiner Waldorf

Early Years settings to develop their own assessment guidelines within our educational philosophy and principles. These will be discussed with you during your parent consultations and/or during parent evenings. For more information, please ask your child's teacher.

Parents' evenings

Parents' evenings are good fun, a great opportunity to socialise, do a craft, learn a song, or perhaps experience ring time. They are held once a term and give the chance to discuss the kindergarten group as a whole. Teachers will address matters relating to the curriculum, teaching methods and the children's stages of development. It is also an opportunity to talk over general matters relating to the class. Please make sure that at least one member of your family is present. Please let us know in advance if you know you cannot attend and ensure you get all the important information from your class rep.



Reports

At the end of each academic year, the teacher will meet with you to discuss your child's progress over the year. Parents have found this in-depth consultation more useful than any written standardised report. Reports for kindergarten children are solely for parents' information.

The teacher will meet with the parents of all five year olds to share their EYFS profile.

If your child leaves kindergarten to continue in a different school, you can ask for a written report that you can pass on to their new teacher. The new school can also request it.

EVERYDAY PRACTICAL MATTERS

Food

Snacks: The children have a small snack in the morning, and we ask that the parents contribute one piece of fruit and vegetable (organic and seasonal where possible) per week for the children's snack.

Lunch: The school offers organic vegetarian lunches for a small charge per day.

Special dietary needs or allergies: If your child has any special dietary needs or allergies to any foods, please ensure that this is stated on the application form and on the medical consent form when they join the school. If this changes during the year, you must inform their teacher and reception immediately so that records can be updated.

Please note, we are no longer a nut free school.

What to bring for your child

It is essential that your child has the appropriate clothing. Please label all their belongings. The school cannot be held responsible for lost items.

For school days

Practical clothes that allow comfortable and free play inside and outside:

- Wellington boots or walking boots for the garden with warm socks.
- A warm, rainproof coat and trousers.
- Scarf, hat and warm mittens for colder days.
- Sun hats in the summer (sun cream must be applied by parents).
- Indoor shoes (ideally soft woollen slippers with a backing).

NB Please note there should be no logos or large picture images on any of the above clothing.

For woodland days

Clothing in several layers is best, as layers can easily be taken off or put on. Natural materials like wool or silk are best to keep children warm even if they get a little damp. Long trousers and long sleeves in the woods on all days, please!

- A labelled, waterproof rucksack, with a buckle at the front.

- A bottle with water (about half a litre) or thermal flask with warm tea in winter time.
- A set of spare clothes (very important for new, younger children).
- Strong, warm waterproof walking boots (not Wellingtons).
- Warm waterproof trousers and jacket (dungarees are more difficult for toileting in the woods)
- Scarf, hat and warm waterproof mittens for colder days.
- Sun hats in the summer (sun cream must be applied by the parents).

Please do not put toys or food in your child's rucksack.



Dress code

Clothing should not have any printed motifs, caricatures or cartoons, as it distracts children's attention and can create a competitive aspect around clothing and equipment. This also applies to slippers, rucksacks, bags and lunch boxes that are used in the kindergarten. Please NO flashing shoes or 'croc's' in kindergarten. Crocs prevent children from running and climbing safely.

Hair that is longer than shoulder length must be tidy and kept off the face (see also the medical section on head lice). For health and safety reasons we do not allow jewellery at school as this can cause injury during energetic activities.

Children should have their nails cut short and clean for baking day, with no nail varnish. No watches, please.

PUNCTUALITY AND THE START OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Handing children over to the kindergarten teacher in a quiet way helps to create a peaceful start to the day. The teachers then lead the children into the kindergarten or garden for play and activities as the parents depart.

Whilst we understand that family life can be very busy and unexpected events do occur, we would like to emphasise that arriving on time for the beginning of the kindergarten day is essential. This is really important for ensuring the most positive school experience for your child and for maintaining the smooth daily running of the school. It makes a huge difference to how your child settles in the morning - children who arrive late miss out on important parts of our programme and often find it more difficult to settle into the kindergarten and enter into activities that have already started. It can also be very disruptive for the other children who are already engrossed in their activities. It also shows respect for our work and the great care we take in planning the day.

Children arriving later than 8.30am will be marked in our register as 'Late'.

Late morning drop off

Should you be delayed for some unavoidable reason, please telephone the school as early as possible so that the message can be passed on to the kindergarten teacher in good time.

If you arrive late but before 9am, you must sign in at reception and be accompanied to the kindergarten by the receptionist. Please hand over your child to the teacher or assistant as quietly as possible without engaging in any unnecessary conversation with the staff or children so as not to disturb the session already in progress.

If for any reason you will arrive later than 9am, you must sign in and wait at reception. Your child's teacher will be consulted in order to ascertain at what point it is suitable to join the group.

Collecting your child at the end of the day

It is very important to collect your child punctually at going home time. It is upsetting for children to be left behind after their friends have gone, and teachers often have other duties and meetings to attend.

Late pick-ups

When kindergarten finishes and a child is not picked up in time, the teacher takes responsibility for the child for another fifteen minutes. After this, the teacher will take the child to reception and then contact the parents. A record is kept and charges will be incurred. Please let the receptionist or teachers know if you might be late or if you have arranged a pick up by another adult.

Collection consent forms

We are not permitted to allow children to be collected from school by any person not authorised by you in advance, either on the collection consent form completed when your child joined the school or a consent form submitted before the collection date. If you want somebody other than the person on your collection consent form to collect your child on a particular day (for example for a birthday party), then you must complete a 'one off' Collection Consent Form beforehand. In emergencies, please call the receptionist and fill in a form afterwards.

Absence from kindergarten

If your child cannot attend kindergarten, please inform the school as early as possible on or before the day by ringing reception.

Absences for reasons other than illness are strongly discouraged as they interrupt individual children's education and disturb the rhythm of the class. Parents who wish to take their children out of school for exceptional reasons must ask permission from the teacher in advance using a Leave of Absence Request Form. Unauthorised absences are recorded and attendance figures collated for individual children as we have a statutory duty to notify the Local Authority of children over statutory school age with persistent absence.

MEDICAL MATTERS - FIRST AID, MEDICATION AND ILLNESS

Accidents and incidents

Minor accidents are dealt with in the kindergarten. All our kindergarten teachers and assistants are trained in first aid. Accidents and incidents are recorded, and parents informed of the measures taken to ensure the well-being of the child. These are then reported on 'My Concern'.

Trained medical professionals will be called in the case of more serious accidents, which require treatment beyond simple first aid. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible and informed of any action taken.

Injuries occurring outside of school must be reported to the teacher at the beginning of the morning. Please fill in the appropriate form in the morning.

The school has appointed first aid officers. However, we are not able to administer general medication, including analgesics. If children fall ill during the day, parents will be contacted and the child kept comfortable until they can be collected.

Illness

When children are ill, please keep them at home until the condition has passed. Please call to inform school of any absence before 9am. Children should not usually return to school for a period of 48 hours if they have had a high temperature, diarrhoea, an infectious illness, or have been vomiting. When the child returns to school, a note must be given to the teacher.

You are asked to notify the school of any infectious illnesses, such as mumps, measles, German measles, chicken pox etc. Please note that some infectious diseases are notifiable and, where this is so, the advice of the health authorities will be followed. The school reserves the right to exclude pupils with notifiable infectious diseases in consultation with the health services. In an emergency, the school will endeavour to contact parents at the earliest opportunity.

Medication

Please note: the school is unable to administer any form of authorised medication (such as inhalers) without written parental consent and instructions.

Permission must be obtained in advance for any medicines (prescription or non-prescription) to be allowed on school grounds.

Therefore it is essential that parents complete the necessary forms to enable their child to have medication during the school day, whether this is short-term or long-term. We have medication forms for long-term illness and short-term illness, which must be signed by the parent and completed with as much detail as possible.

Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their contact details are up to date and they can be contacted at all times should their child become ill and need to go home during the school day. Parents are also expected to keep their teacher informed of any changes in their child's care arrangements, either temporary or permanent.

Allergies and chronic health conditions

If a child has a chronic health condition, such as asthma, diabetes or epilepsy, or an allergy, such as to stings, or types of food or nuts, parents must notify the school on admission of the child by completing the school's Medical Consent Forms. Completed forms are kept in your child's file and a record of the condition or allergy posted on the inside of the first aid cupboard for speedy identification and treatment.

The condition should be fully discussed with the teacher and/or Early Years Coordinator, who will usually request further details. Parents whose children have chronic medical conditions requiring prescription medicines will be required to complete a 'Parental Consent for the Administering of Medication' form, and the school will consider accepting responsibility for administration of the medication. Where agreed, the necessary procedures will be put in place, including full consents and instructions for managing the condition. An 'Individual Health Plan' may also be required for some conditions. Where necessary, an emergency supply of any medication, with instructions for use, will be kept at school.

First aid supplies are available in school and kits are taken on all trips. No internal remedies will be administered, as these are regarded as medication, without special arrangements being in place.

Where specialised first aid training is required, the school must be notified so that the necessary training can be undertaken. It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school if your child's condition worsens or otherwise changes,

and to keep contact details up to date.

Head lice

Head lice (nits) are a perennial problem in all schools. Please check your child's scalp and hair roots regularly. Please notify the school if you discover your child does have lice, and treat promptly. The school will notify parents if there is a case of lice/nits in the class.

GENERAL

Toys

Toys should not be brought to kindergarten: they can easily be left behind and/or lost or broken, or be squabbled over in the kindergarten, which may be distressing for your child or for other children. In exceptional circumstances, children may find it easier to settle with their own toy, but this must be discussed with the teacher.



Television

Steiner teachers advise that young children do not watch television or play on the computer, especially on school days. There is strong research data to confirm the ill-effects on the physical, emotional and social development of young children who watch TV.

The teachers strive to stimulate lively pictures in the child's own imagination, and these are undermined by the passivity induced by TV or electronic media.

Please see recommended reading article in the appendix.

Birthday celebrations

Individual children's birthdays are celebrated in kindergarten and are very special occasions. As individual festivals, they help to create for the child a picture of their own life and their place in the life of their family. They are also a beautiful way of sharing their story with their friends, and help to engender a deep respect for all our differences and individual stories. The teacher tells a special birthday story as part of the celebration. The teacher will speak to you sometime before the event, and may ask you to bring something to share, like a cake and you will be invited to attend.

When planning the date of a birthday party for your child at home, it may be helpful to remember that, when birthdays fall on kindergarten days, we celebrate them in kindergarten and your child will probably feel very tired after an extra exciting kindergarten day.

We strongly recommend keeping your child's birthday party simple and small scale. A helpful guide is to only invite as many children as the child's age, for example four children when the child turns four.

We would like to suggest that you do not arrange parties after school festivals like Martinmas or the Advent Spiral, because young children can easily be overloaded with sense experiences and it can also destroy the carefully created mood of the festival, which often stays with children for some time and takes a while for them to assimilate and fully appreciate.

Please hand out individual invitations or thank you cards to the parents rather than to the children.

Thank you.

THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Safety and security

The school door is pass coded and this code should not be shared with children or visitors at any time. Neither should the door be left or propped open at any time. There is normally a receptionist at the desk who will open the door in response to the doorbell or seeing people at the door. If for any reason nobody is at the desk, please be patient for a few moments until they return. For safety reasons, kindergarten age children are not allowed to arrive, leave or walk through the school by themselves. Parents and

children are asked to walk quietly through the school at all times. Please hold your child's hand walking through the corridors. Running is not allowed at any time. In this way, the children learn to appreciate and respect the school and work of the school in general.

Signing in

For security and safety reasons, the school is required to know who is on the site. We ask all adults entering the building outside pick-up and drop-off times to sign in the visitors book on the front desk where a visitors badge will be issued, and to ensure they sign out (and hand their badge back!) when leaving.

Car park

Children must be supervised at all times in the car park and on the road outside the school.

Please do not park in the school car park or the parking spaces reserved for the swimming pool adjoining the school at any time. The car park is for staff cars and pool users only. Parking can be found on the street outside the school grounds, and children should be walked safely into the school building.

Kindergarten children walking to the school should hold their parent's hand.

The school wishes to be environmentally responsible and to encourage all safe means of transport, particularly where it reduces the numbers of cars on the roads. Many parents find sharing rides to school invaluable. Please feel able to liaise with other parents in your area or put a notice in the newsletter (via the receptionist) to organise carpooling.

The role of parents

We aim to work in partnership with each family to support their child's growth and development. You can help us to enhance and enrich your child's

education and experience by working closely with us. Attending parents' evenings and consultations and keeping in touch with your teacher and the wider school helps to provide an integrated experience for your child, and helps us to find ways to support your child's unique set of developmental needs. Individual parent consultations and parents' evenings provide you with the most insight into what your child has been doing each day at school and how you can best support their education and progress. There is also a programme of workshops, talks and study groups for parents to further deepen their knowledge and understanding of the unique education we offer at Cambridge Steiner School.

We believe that being part of a warm, vibrant, active and supportive community is an important experience for our children, which parents can be involved with as well as supporting their own child's individual progress. In order to maintain a beautiful and safe educational environment at school, and to help create an efficient and vibrant community, we ask that parents commit to certain responsibilities:

1. To read the school newsletter.

The newsletter is our main means of communication so it is essential that you read it to keep up to date with what is going on.

2. At least one member of each family to attend the annual Community Workdays.

As the saying goes, 'many hands make light work'. There is nothing that builds a sense of community as much as working together.

3. At least one member of each family to volunteer at the May Fair and at the Advent Fair to support these important school events. To prepare one dish for the May Fair and the Advent Fair.

These fairs are our big community events of the year. They are magical occasions for our children where they experience their wider community as we all come together to celebrate. We take part in shared activities, such as maypole dancing or candle dipping, and we also share food, play music and enjoy one another's company. Some fairs are open to the wider community too, which is great for publicity and can be a good opportunity to raise funds for the school. The fairs rely entirely on the voluntary work of the teachers and parent community to organise them and run them on the day. If you are interested in getting involved with the planning of these events for the coming year, please contact your child's teacher or class representative.

Please note that the responsibilities listed here are the minimal requirement. Parents also take on numerous other responsibilities that are crucial to the healthy running of our school such as: helping with fundraising, running groups, being a class representative and helping with school trips. We also encourage parents to come forward if they have skills that they would like to share with the children.

We appreciate that we all live under the pressure of time, but we believe that the level of involvement that we are asking for, while significant, is reasonable and manageable. If you experience it as otherwise, please do let us know. We hope that you will also feel supported and enriched by being part of our community.

Class representatives

Each class in the school has a class representative (class rep). These are parents who help the teacher by supporting communications with other parents, helping to organise class events and various other activities. The work of the class rep is very much valued in the school. Please speak to your child's teacher if you are interested in becoming a class rep.



Workshops, talks, study and craft groups

The school arranges workshops, talks and study groups for parents, with a view to enriching the cultural life of our community. Many parents gain a great deal of insight into Steiner Waldorf education and healthy parenting through participating in these sessions. Suggestions are always welcome for new items. There is a friendly weekly craft group organised by and for parents, with a vibrant programme of craft activities, some of which will provide items for our regular school fairs. Please check the notice boards and the newsletter for information.

Notice boards

There are several notice boards around the school. The most important one is in the reception area, and all the latest news will be displayed here, so please make sure you check it frequently. Amongst other interesting items on the notice boards, you will also find the latest copy of our newsletter for those who prefer to read through it on paper.

Kindergarten cloakrooms

The teachers have noticeboards and blackboards in their cloakrooms with all sorts of important notices, useful information and items of interest for parents to look at whilst they are waiting for their children.

Again, please make sure you look when in school.

School newsletter

The school sends out a regular newsletter, and it is essential that all parents read it as it contains a diary update, information on events, things happening in the school and other news of interest. The newsletter is also displayed on the school notice board in reception. Important emails are sent out directly to parents, but 'in general' news is sent out via the newsletter.

Concerns and complaints

We try to deal with concerns swiftly and openly and before they become a serious issue or complaint.

Most concerns can be addressed informally initially. If you have a concern, please bring it to our attention as soon as possible by contacting the most appropriate person. Should the concern be about your child/your child's education, then in the first instance please speak to your child's teacher. General concerns can be brought to the attention of the Early Years Coordinator or the Head of School. If you have a safeguarding concern about a child, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If you have a serious concern, a formal complaint or feel your questions/worries have not been properly addressed, please make an appointment to speak with the Head of School who acts as the Complaints Coordinator. Please also refer to our Complaints and Concerns Policy, which can be found on our website or a copy can be obtained from the School Office.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Cambridge Steiner School is an independent school that relies on parental input and contributions (financial and otherwise) for its financial and environmental well-being. We aspire to offer the best Steiner Waldorf education that we can within the resources available, and we see the provision of those resources as a community responsibility. If you have any questions about financial matters, please make an appointment to see the Finance Officer.

Fees

Fees become payable in full at the start of each term. You may pay by standing order, bank transfer, cheque, or through your employer's salary sacrifice scheme (until your child is of compulsory school age). The method of payment should also be agreed with the Finance Officer.

During any agreed 'settling in' period, if your child doesn't attend the whole day, only the morning rate is charged.

All fees are reviewed and may be revised annually and, as such, all financial agreements are renewed or replaced on an annual basis. You will receive a new invoice at the start of each term and it is your responsibility to make arrangements to pay your fees on time.

Early Years Funding (EYF)

Our school is registered as an Early Years Provider and, as such, kindergarten children between the ages of three and five years old are entitled to Early Years Funding for up to 15 hours per week. Please note that we do not offer the extended entitlement of 30 hours, nor do we offer two-year-old funding.

Children become eligible from the term after they turn three through to the term they turn five. If you wish to know more about Early Years Funding, please speak to the Finance Officer. Further details can also be found by searching for 'Free childcare for three and four year olds' on the Cambridgeshire County Council website: <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk>.

Sibling discounts

Discounts are available for all siblings of children already enrolled in the school. Please see our website for more information.

Bursaries—fee assistance

You can download our Bursary Fund Policy from the website or ask for a copy at Reception. This gives full information about the bursaries potentially available to families who are unable to meet the full cost of fees. It is important that parents apply before the bursary application deadline for each school year (usually during the spring term). Late bursary applications will not be considered.

Handing in notice

We require a full half term's notice in writing to terminate a child's place (notice given on or before the first day of a half term and expiring at the end of that half term), otherwise the fees will be charged for the following half term. If notice is not given, fees will be charged in lieu of the notice period. In addition, please remember that deposits are only returnable when all fees are paid in full.



Reception and administration

Please ask at Reception for general queries or information. Reception is open Mondays to Fridays from 8.15am to 3.15pm. When reception is unattended, messages left on the answerphone are checked regularly. The receptionist can be contacted by telephone on 01223 882727 or by email at: reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk.

For administration and admissions queries, please speak to the receptionist who will direct you to the appropriate person. For non-urgent queries please use email.

If you wish to speak to the Head of School or to the Finance Officer, please try to make a prior appointment.

MOVING ON

Liaison between the kindergartens and your child's new teacher is important and helps to create a smooth transition for your child. Working together with a child's new teacher enables them to assess your child's skills and abilities before they begin and start to plan for them.

Moving up to Class 1 in the Lower School

The majority of our children stay in our kindergartens until entry into Class 1 of our Lower School the September after their sixth birthday. They become familiar with the school during their time in the kindergarten, so the transition to Class 1 is a joyful and much-anticipated experience. The teachers prepare the children for entry into Class 1 through a specially designed programme of activities throughout the final year in kindergarten, and a specific transition programme in the summer term, working together with staff from the Lower School. We will provide a report for your child to share with yourselves and the Class 1 teacher with full information about your child, their skills, abilities and needs.

Moving on to another school

Liaison between your child's teacher and your child's new school is important and is likely to benefit your child. We offer the opportunity for your child's new teacher to visit your child in our kindergarten. This establishes a valuable link and eases the child's transition to their new school. We will provide a report for your child to share with yourselves and the new school with full information about your child, their skills, abilities and needs.

MISCELLANEOUS

Recycling

Children in the kindergarten learn through imitation to care for the environment. The school is working towards an improved recycling and composting programme.

Overseas pupils

Periodically the school is contacted by overseas Steiner school pupils and au pairs who wish to visit us

or arrange an exchange/stay with a family in this country. Details are published in the newsletter and/or placed on the notice boards.

Bad weather and snow

In bad weather conditions (such as heavy snow), please:

- check the school website for updates and closure information;
- tune in to BBC Radio Cambridgeshire in the morning (95.7 FM, 96 FM, or DAB) or HEART FM for an announcement of school closures;
- where possible, there may also be a message on the school answerphone.

A message will be distributed through the emergency contact tree (involving staff and class reps), so please also check your emails and text messages.

Complete closure means that no teachers will be in attendance. However, partial closure means some teachers will be in attendance offering supervision of children.

Dogs

Dogs are not permitted on the school premises except in the car park (except for guide dogs or hearing dogs).

Policies and procedures

The school's policies and procedures, both mandatory ones and those that the school wishes to use in addition, are available on our website www.cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk. Please ask at reception if you would like a copy of a particular policy. All our policies and procedures are subject to regular review to keep them in line with current regulations and best practice.

Behaviour and bullying

The school is committed to ensuring a safe physical and emotional learning environment for all children. Bullying is not acceptable in any form, and staff work actively according to our Positive Behaviour and Discipline Policy and Prevention of Bullying Policy.

Teachers will follow up incidents promptly whenever they are noticed or reported according to the policy. All reported incidents are recorded, and anyone with

concerns about bullying should in the first instance inform the child's teacher.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Cambridge Steiner School is committed to ensuring a safe physical and emotional learning environment for all pupils and ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all who work in the school. This includes the principles of equality of access to educational opportunities for all.

The general medical care of children is held to be primarily the responsibility of parents. Please ensure the school has up to date contact information in case we need to contact you in an emergency.

The school has an appointed Health and Safety Officer and a Health and Safety Policy. This policy meets the statutory requirements and sets out the areas that require guidelines and procedures to be followed.

All staff and those on the school site are bound by the provisions of the Health and Safety Policy including contractors, parents, visitors and volunteers. Parents with questions and concerns about health and safety should contact the School Manager and/or review our Health and Safety Policy on our website.



Safeguarding children

The school has an appointed Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who ensures that our procedures and practice for safeguarding children comply with statutory regulations and guidelines set by Social Care. The procedures are set out in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, available on our website.

Staff and volunteers all have regular training on safeguarding and child protection, and all staff and volunteers are subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (formerly CRB), and other safer recruitment checks.

Parents will normally be consulted in any safeguarding matter involving their child. However, the child's interests are considered paramount, and the school will in all instances act on the advice of Social Care and the statutory guidelines.

E Safety

We work more specifically with our 5-and 6 year old children in regard of E- safety, addressing aspects of E-safety in a developmentally appropriate way.

Parents are expected to participate in this work. The biggest protection the children can have comes from the relationship they have with their parents, teachers and friends. We continue to develop a healthy dialogue with parents about all aspects of their children's well-being. Our approach is built on a mutual relationship of trust, honesty, commitment and co-operation.

Curriculum

From kindergarten onwards we teach children about healthy and safe relationships through: stories; imitation; looking after each other and our things; sharing and seeing each other's gifts and qualities; building relationships with the child and their family; promoting peer support; promoting a healthy lifestyle; and developing an understanding of positive risk through things like our outdoor curriculum.

Technology Curriculum

We start teaching the children about the concept of 'technology' from kindergarten with the introduction of using tools (such as carding wool, knitting etc.). This 'technology' curriculum progresses through our outdoor curriculum where children make their own flint knives for example, and learn how tools can be useful, but dangerous if used incorrectly. In Class 6 children are formally introduced to ICT. Our aim through this approach is to slowly build a broad understanding about the nature of technology and therefore critical thinking about how and when information technology is useful or potentially unsafe.

Use of mobile phones in school

We do not expect any children of kindergarten age to carry or use a mobile phone.

We ask you not to use your mobile phones within the school premises. Please make it a habit to turn off your mobile phone while on school premises.

Mobile Phones (or cameras) must not be used to take any photographs during kindergarten events, e.g. birthday celebrations or festivals.

For further information, please see our Use of Mobile Phones and Technological Devices Policy

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The kindergartens recognise and have regard for the child's religious persuasion, ethnic origins, cultural and linguistic background or disability, so that each child is valued as an individual without racial or gender stereotyping. We aim to promote equality of opportunity for all. Our children will be helped to develop positive self-identity and to value and respect all cultural and ethnic groups through our resources and activities. The school is committed to ensuring access as far as is reasonably possible to all facilities for staff and pupils. If you have any questions or concerns about this, please contact the SENCO, who is also the staff member responsible for Equal Opportunities (ENCo).

Special educational needs and disability (SEND)

Our Early Years provision considers all children to be special and that every child has individual needs. We aim to meet the needs of all the children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, in a way appropriate to their age, stage of development and personal circumstances. We also follow the SEND Code of Practice guidelines to ensure a graduated response, and to work in partnership with the parents. The school aims to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, can access the curriculum. Our Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy is an integral part of our Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policy. If you have any concerns regarding your child, please speak to your child's teacher or our Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator (SENCO), who works closely with the teachers. Our SEND Policy is available on our website.

RECOMMENDED READING

Television

TV is embedded in our culture and taken for granted to such a degree that it is often difficult for us to question its value. Similarly, with the increasing prominence of cinema, the personal computer, mobile phone technology and video games and their adoption into everyday life, rarely is a dissenting voice heard. However, it is widely held amongst those involved in Steiner Waldorf education, as well as by researchers in the USA and other countries, that watching TV and videos and playing computer games is detrimental to the healthy development of the child. Reasons for this are:

1. All children have an innate imaginative capacity and their natural state is to be active in this. This is one of the great gifts of childhood and crucial for their healthy journey into adulthood, when children acquire other faculties. As they do so, it is a capacity, which is usually lost or transformed, never to be re-lived in the same way. TV, videos and/or computer games etc. make children unhealthily 'still' and stifle their own imaginations. By presenting the child with 'finished' images, the child is required to do no inner work (or active play) at all and their imagination is 'disabled' while watching. Afterwards, this can result in listlessness, lack of initiative and boredom; children may need to be constantly entertained. Alternatively, it may result in children being over-stimulated to such an extent that they can no longer listen properly to real people - they switch on or off as they please. It is felt that this kind of stimulation is, in fact, deprivation for the child's own abundant creative abilities.

2. Through our education, we encourage children's natural capacity to be highly sensitive to their environment and the people around them. They are, therefore, deeply susceptible to being mesmerised; they cannot filter their absorption of the things they see and hear. We are careful in both the kindergartens and school to present material in a way appropriate to their age and sensibilities. By contrast, frequently, the quality of children's material on TV, videos and computers is very poor. They force images and noises of all kinds on the child, which are in our view inappropriate—the children may become desensitised as their threshold for violence, noise, aesthetics, moral and social behaviours—you name it—lowers. Young children do not have the discrimination to regulate their own watching. They

are not yet able to know what is good for them and what is not, and they depend on the adults around them to decide the boundaries, which will protect them (in all areas of life, not just this one) until they can freely take care of themselves.

3. Furthermore, the images that flash past on the screen are not connected to real life—they are an artificial representation of life and, as such, abstract. One cannot relate to TV. By contrast, in a Steiner school, the teachers do not use textbooks—they seek to give stories and lesson content from memory so that the communication exchange is real and alive. Children live vividly in the present and, to be healthy, they need to feel deeply connected to the world around them. They do not have the intellectual sophistication to cope healthily with this abstract phenomenon. TV et al literally undo the work we do at our school.

We would ideally like all TVs to be gathering dust under a cloth. However, recognising that this is unlikely, we request that children attending our kindergartens do not watch TV from Sunday to Thursday. They should definitely not watch TV in the mornings before coming to school.

If your child is used to a heavy diet of television watching, don't despair! It may be easier than it sounds to change your family routine. Many of us have discovered that one-time TV addicts have found a wealth of positive things to do in the creative and supportive atmosphere of a Steiner school community.

Further reading

Martin Large, *Set Free Childhood...* a parent's survival guide to coping with computers and TV, Hawthorn Press ISBN 1-903458-43-9

C. Clouder and M. Rawson, *Waldorf Education: A basic introduction to the Steiner Waldorf School*, Floris Books

J. Salter, *The Incarnating Child*, Hawthorn Press

Rawson & Rose, *Ready to Learn, From Birth to School Readiness*, Hawthorn Press

S. Jenkinson, *The Genius of Play*, Hawthorn Press

L. Oldfield, *Free to Learn (Introducing Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education)*, Hawthorn Press

T. Finser, *School as a Journey; the eight-year Odyssey of a Waldorf teacher and his class*, Anthroposophical Press

Rudolf Steiner, *Education of the Child*, Rudolf Steiner Press

Festivals Family and Food, Hawthorn

Press All Year Round, Hawthorn Press

Please see your Kindergarten teacher for the useful following articles by Susan Johnson from *You're Not the Boss of Me!* published by the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, 2007, ISBN: 978 0 9722238 8 1:

- The Importance of Warmth
- The Importance of Breakfast
- The Importance of Sleep
- The Meaning of Illness
- Fever

Other leaflets and information are also available within the kindergartens.

Thank you

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this handbook. If you have any questions at all, please do let us know.