

Lower School Curriculum Procedure January 2020

Reviewed by: Sarah Fox

Review date: January 2020

Next review: August 2020

Related Policies and Documents: Curriculum Policy, Assessment Policy and Procedure; SEND Policy; SEND Support Ideas; EAL Policy; British Values and SMSC Statement; PSHE Curriculum Policy; Lower School Curriculum Outline and Framework for Literacy, Numeracy and Science; CSS Curriculum 'at a glance'; SWSF – The embedded Curriculum; E-Safety Curriculum Outline; Outdoor Classroom Handbook.

Endorsement

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

Name: Joel Chalfen

Position: Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

Signed:



Date: February 2020

Introduction

Cambridge Steiner School (CSS) is one of over nine hundred Steiner Waldorf Schools worldwide in over sixty countries. Our school shares a curriculum and a teaching method which fosters the child's healthy development and stimulates the child's enthusiasm for learning. We are committed to offering an education designed at every level to meet the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and disabilities and those with English as an additional language, at their various stages of emotional, intellectual and physical development. Our curriculum gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.

Curriculum Intent

Our aim is to provide an 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. Each child is seen as a unique individual with his or her own path in life. Our skills-led curriculum effectively prepares our pupils for future learning, along with the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society, by developing resilience, a growth mind-set and perseverance. Our curriculum promotes the fundamental human values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

The academic, social, moral, and spiritual growth of every child is held as a central objective of our education. Children's capacities and personal abilities are helped to unfold by providing them with a broad, rich and carefully planned curriculum that enhances their own natural developmental growth and builds on prior learning. At Cambridge Steiner School, there is an understanding that:

- All students are entitled to, and should be offered, a comparable range of equal educational opportunities.
- Every child is unique, having individual aptitudes, abilities, interests and other characteristics, which need to be catered for.

The Cambridge Steiner School follows the educational indications given by Rudolf Steiner and works with these indications in order to meet the educational needs of the children at our school. The Steiner Waldorf Curriculum is not prescriptive. It is used as a source of inspiration and guidance to stimulate the creativity of the teacher. As a school we are committed to an on-going process of curriculum review and development.

Implementation of the Curriculum

Quality of Teaching

Our class teachers are expected to have completed a Steiner Waldorf Teachers' Training course and often have other teaching qualifications and/or teaching experience in a variety of educational environments. When taking on a role of Lower School class teacher, the teacher commits him or herself (in principle) to the care of the children for the whole eight years. With this commitment the teacher gets to know the children well, understands their strengths and difficulties, and can work with the class as a small community forming bonds between the children, their teacher and the parents. This deep knowledge of each pupil allows teachers to deliver a curriculum that effectively builds upon prior learning. It is an educational journey for the children, the teacher and the parents, during which all will learn from the others. Our subject teachers bring specialist skills and knowledge to the classes. Quality of teaching is monitored by the Education Manager, overseen trustees. The school has a supportive appraisal and mentoring system in place. External advisors visit the school periodically (usually twice a year) to observe lessons and provide feedback and support to teachers.

Curriculum Development

Our weekly staff meetings (department, faculty and class teacher) are the forum in which teachers:

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- Study and discuss aspects of the curriculum;
- Share questions and insights with colleagues;
- Engage in CPD and other training i.e. SEND;
- Share observations of the children;
- Consider the needs of the children in our care in relation to the curriculum indications;
- Identify possible improvements and development of the educational provision at the Cambridge Steiner School - recommendations will then be considered by the School Leadership Team;
- Discuss practical day to day aspects of the curriculum and children's school experience;
- Plan for school festivals;
- Review concerns, observations and support mechanisms for pupil behaviour and safeguarding;
- Moderation, making sure there is a consistent understanding of expectations across the school. This is done through sharing and evaluating lesson plans more generally, in relation to the curriculum indications. Class teachers might present to one another a review of their lessons or examples of pupils work or experiences in class: mistakes made, things discovered and new understandings. These are then discussed by the group.

Lesson Planning

Class and Subject Teachers will:

- Plan lessons with reference to our own curriculum framework, SWSF framework documents and the guidelines given in the '**The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum**' edited by M. Rawson and T. Richter (Steiner Waldorf Education) as well as other recommended texts, ensuring that teaching builds on pupils' prior learning. We do also expect teachers to refer to other curriculum sources and to Rudolf Steiner's many lectures on pedagogy.
- Give and receive support through informal conversations with colleagues and through participation in our mentoring program and regular staff meetings.
- Prepare an Annual Plan before the beginning of each academic year.
- Prepare more detailed schemes of work for each term (subject teachers) and in advance of each main lesson block (class teachers).
- Give consideration to the differing levels of ability, aptitude and needs of the children in the class and prepare work that is appropriately differentiated to meet these.

Ongoing Review and Evaluation

Assessment for learning forms a key part of our approach. It is process orientated. It includes the monitoring of the ongoing learning of pupils and is used to make adjustments to the learning process and to offer reflections to students. This is an essential part of the preparation and planning process and should be part of every teacher's daily routine. In addition to this the teachers at the Cambridge Steiner School will, in their mentor meetings, talk about the progress of their lessons and identify those aspects of their original plans and expectations that were not met as well as those things that went well. In this way, colleagues may be able to offer helpful suggestions and learn from one another's experience. Such a process may also take place informally between colleagues or within regular review meetings between the Education Manager and individual class teachers.

Related documents: Assessment Policy & Procedure; Appraisal Policy and Mentoring Guidance.

Structure of the Day

The children enter Lower School the year after they turn six. Children attend for five days from 8.30am to 3.00pm.

Wednesday afternoon (from 1-3pm) is optional for Class 1 and 2. The class teacher aims to accompany their class through the eight years (class 1 to class 8), providing a secure learning environment. The Lower School currently has five classes, some are combined (Class 2&3 and Class 6&7) and others are individual classes (Class 1, Class 4 and Class 5). Teachers work with and through the children's imagination and their feeling life. The day is structured differently from Kindergarten, with the introduction of formal learning and discrete lessons. The children are taught predominantly by their class teacher; however, they also enjoy a wide range of specialist subject lessons.

School Day:

8.30 – 10.40 am:	Main Lesson
10.40 – 11.10 am:	Break
11.10 – 12.30 pm:	Subject Lessons
12.30 – 1.30 pm:	Lunch
1.30 – 3 pm:	Subject Lessons

The core of the curriculum is the Main Lesson, typically taught in three-to-four-week blocks of two hours each morning. These lessons include topics such as literacy, numeracy, farming, geography, botany and mythology. They are taught in an imaginative, experiential and age-appropriate manner, with the children producing their own written and illustrated books. The class teacher takes the Main Lesson blocks and integrates literacy and numeracy as well as practical and artistic activities such as painting, drawing, modelling, drama and movement and music. Main Lessons have a daily rhythm, including verses, movement, recall, rhythmic work, new material and written work. Each class has time set aside each week to allow for extended literacy and numeracy practice. Subject lessons include: Form Drawing, Painting, Modeling, Music, Games/Movement, French, German, Eurythmy, Handwork, Outdoor Education and included within that Gardening.

In order to gain an understanding of how different the wide range of subjects taught in the Lower School interconnect, and to see the progression within the different learning areas, please see the following supporting documents:

- *CSS Lower School 'at a glance'*
- *Lower School Curriculum Outline*
- *Curriculum Framework for Literacy, Numeracy and Science*
- *Outdoor Classroom Handbook*
- *SEND Policy and 'SEND Support Ideas' document*
- *EAL Policy*
- *SMSC/British Values Statement*
- *PSHE Curriculum Policy*
- *Careers Guidance and Access for Education Policy*
- *E-Safety Curriculum Outline*

Learning Environment

The teachers aim to create an environment that enables all pupils to focus on their learning. At CSS we believe that classrooms shouldn't be seen as just rooms with desks and books—a child's sense of motivation, morale and desire to learn is connected to their learning environment. Our classrooms are designed with deliberation and intentionality. Use of colour, comfort, and space are all key factors in creating an educational experience designed around the child that inspires curiosity and embraces free-thinking. The learning environment is also influenced by high expectations for positive behaviour, nurtured through a culture of care and respect for one another and our surroundings. Educational resources and materials are carefully selected or designed to meet the developing needs of each class.

Related documents: Behaviour and Discipline Policy and Prevention of Bullying Policy.

Monitoring

The Cambridge Steiner School teaches the International Steiner Waldorf Curriculum rather than the National Curriculum and pupils do not sit SATs tests or other national tests. Instead their progress is regularly reviewed by the class and subject teachers through ongoing formative assessment, regular Point in Time assessments and summative observations (see Assessment Policy and Procedure). Questions of child progress issues are shared in Teacher Meetings and Pupil Progress Meetings, as well as regular screening in association with our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCo) and external SEND consultant (see SEND Policy).

The class teachers organises individual meetings with the parents/carers of each child twice a year. Class parents' evenings are also held twice a year and provide an opportunity to discuss the progress of the class as a whole.

Record keeping

Records should be kept in accordance with the school's Assessment Policy and Procedure, with reference to the school's own aims.

A summary of these observations and evaluations is given to the parents in the form of an annual school report at the end of each academic year.

Impact of the Curriculum

Through a broad range of learning experiences, our learners grapple with and come to master key concepts and develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum. By maintaining a focus on the development of the 'whole child' our pupils develop a high sense of self-confidence, creative thinking skills and a willingness to give things a go. They are, in this way, very well equipped for their next stage of education.

In our school mathematical aptitude, scientific understanding and the love of reading and writing are developed in every child in a different way to conventional education. They are combined and enriched with storytelling and physical and artistic activities, providing the strongest possible connection to the material – which stays with the child for life. The children have the opportunity to experience different phenomena for themselves, and to make their own discoveries. This increases their understanding and enthusiasm for learning.

The later start to formal teaching, especially of literacy and numeracy skills, intends to optimise the capacity of children to learn academic skills readily and with enthusiasm. By the age of 6 or 7, our children have acquired a firm foundation in language development and have the necessary physical and social skills, along with a joy for learning and discovery, to aid their transition to formal education. From this stage their learning is sequenced towards reading fluently by the time they are 10 or 11, which is in line with observations reflected in academic research that by the equivalent of KS2, Steiner Waldorf pupils have caught up with and are on average "ahead" of peers in other types of schools.

*For example: Dr Sebastian Suggate (2010) on "Early Reading Instruction: does it really improve reading in the long term?"

Distinctive Features

A Woven Curriculum

The Steiner Waldorf tradition is complex and cross-curricular. The subject 'threads' are woven together in a beautiful tapestry of learning intentions and opportunities. The curriculum is often described as a 'spiral', with topics being re-visited at a higher level of detail and articulation over the Class Teacher years (Class 1-8). The way in which the different subjects interact with one another transcend common 'topics' but align on the deeper level of having a common aim to meet the needs of the children 'at their particular age and stage of development'.

An intellectual, physical education

At the Cambridge Steiner School we strive to give children the gift of an education that will nourish the whole life of the child. To this end we educate not only the intellect, but also the child's physical and emotional intelligence. Through movement, coordination exercises, games, modeling, crafts and handwork, the children develop a connection to their bodies, skill and dexterity in their hands and fingers, and a growing social awareness of 'self' in relation to others. This promotes pupil's self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves.

A creative, spiritual, and cultural education

Music, painting, drawing and stories are a key feature of the way children learn in a Steiner Waldorf school, feeding their emotional, spiritual and moral capacities. Built on this foundation, academic learning can find its place in a way that grows and develops with the child's changing needs. Pupils have a rich variety of cultural experiences across many subjects in the curriculum, which enhance their understanding of different cultural and religious traditions and help to foster a growing awareness of the concept of equality. Their learning is enhanced through extra-curricular opportunities such as festivals, cultural visits, events and visitors, along with instrumental lessons and drama etc.

Early languages

From Class 1 onwards, children learn a wide range of French and German vocabulary and short phrases through songs, verses, poems, recitation, games and cultural activities, such as baking German breads. In these earlier years the emphasis is on listening and speaking: the children internalise the new sounds of a language and are more able to pronounce them accurately whilst their innate language instinct is still more present. The written language is introduced towards the end of Class 3 or beginning of Class 4 where pupils also begin to gain an understanding of the grammar, spelling, phonics and structure of the language. In the older classes there are occasionally opportunities for individual exchanges and pupils from overseas Steiner schools sometimes visit us.

Eurythmy

Eurythmy is a physical performance art that combines choreographed movement with music, poetry and grammar. It is non-competitive, and relies on co-operation, teamwork, social awareness and non-verbal communication. Eurythmy develops children's proprioceptive skills and core strength, supporting them to learn to move with poise and grace. It includes a physical representation of poetry, creating cultural capital in movement and providing a concrete relationship to language. Children connect in a joyful and active way with the technical inner nature of poetry and music, allowing them to retain this understanding in their long-term memory and apply it in other areas of their education.

Eurythmy can also be seen as a form of meditation through mindful movement. Children have to find an inner quietness

in order to listen deeply to the poetry and music, but also to the body language of others, interpreting their unspoken intentions. Eurythmy supports self regulation – physically, emotionally and mentally. Children learn to manage their bodies, their feelings and their thoughts, culminating in the older classes with the confidence to choreograph a performance that shows something of themselves to the world.

Relevant for the 21st century

The Steiner Waldorf approach is highly valued for its contemporary relevance. The economy increasingly needs people with the flexibility and creativity to think nimbly and adapt to our fast-changing world. As a result, Steiner school graduates are often highly sought-after in academia and the workplace.

Outdoor Education: experiential learning

The only source of knowledge is experience
Albert Einstein

In outdoor lessons the children engage in experiential learning in connection with a subject they study in the classroom. This includes both humanity subjects, such as geography and history, and the natural sciences, including geology, physics, chemistry, study of nature and astronomy. Some of these subjects are complemented by other subjects of the outdoor curriculum such as expeditions, navigation, foraging and tracking. Children learn how to keep themselves and each other safe while developing a sense of a healthy risk-taking.

During expeditions children will also develop their personal and social skills and learn leadership and soft skills. The physical activities outdoors and connection with nature will create a positive-self-image and develop confidence, and lead to self-discovery and wellbeing.

Innovative Rites of passage programme for adolescents

The aim of the Rites of Passage curriculum is to guide adolescence towards young adulthood by offering specific knowledge and skills and to teach certain values necessary to become well balanced and healthy members of society. This involves physical, sexual, intellectual, moral and ethical, social and spiritual maturation. Rites of Passage activities include: Circle of Trust; Nature Walk; Vision Quest; Journaling; Mindfulness exercises; Initiatory stories and myths. The purpose of these activities is to support adolescents on their journey and is incorporated into the day-to-day life of the school.

Other important elements within the Lower School

The Festivals

As in Kindergarten, the Lower School celebrates the festivals. These play an important part in the life of the school. They are celebrated throughout the school and bring children, teachers and parents together at significant points. We believe festivals bring a strong feeling of rhythm to the year, an awareness of the seasons and a sense of continuity from year to year. It is not only the line through the year, but also something, which continues from Kindergarten through to Class 8.

Harvest of Work

At the end of each half term for an hour the children share some of their work with kindergarten children, other classes, parents, relatives and friends. This may be based on their Main Lesson or subject lesson work: music, drama, poetry, maths, movement, games, foreign languages etc.

Aims and Aspirations of the Teachers

The teacher is both an artist and professional educator. As an artist, the teacher is responsible for the being of the child. As a professional educator, he or she has a wider responsibility to the requirements of parents, authorities and the State. The teachers have an obligation to fulfill the necessary requirements and they are expected to attend courses and conferences that support their professional development.

*“From out of the spiritual world these children have come down to us.
May we solve their riddles, from day to day from hour to hour.”*

Rudolf Steiner

An important agenda item in teachers’ meetings is the study of the child. In these Child Studies, teachers share observations connected to a specific child, study the general development of that child and look for significant patterns or themes that might help them in their educational approach to that child.

The reverence and respect felt by the teachers for the special qualities of each stage of childhood shapes the school environment: the way children are spoken to, the materials used, the activities undertaken and the approach to learning at each developmental stage. Teachers are dedicated to creating a genuine love of learning within each child and the enthusiasm of the children for their schoolwork is the healthy outcome expected and desired by the teachers.

We monitor each child's progress in order to be aware of her/his needs, providing continuous support whilst in the Cambridge Steiner School.