

## Curriculum Policy April 2019

**Reviewed by:** Sarah Fox

**Review date:** April 2019 [this policy has been identified for further review]

**Next review:** August 2019

**Related Policies:** Assessment Policy and Procedure, Outdoor Education Handbook, British Values Policy, SWSF Literacy and Numeracy Framework; Lower School Core Curriculum Outline; CSS Curriculum 'at a glance' (DRAFT); SWSF – The embedded Curriculum

### Endorsement

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

**Name:** Joel Chalfen

**Position:** Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

**Signed:**



**Date:** February 2019

*The ideal curriculum must be modelled on the changing image of the human being passing through different phases while growing up. But like any ideal it is confronted by the reality of life and must accommodate itself accordingly. This reality comprises many things: the individuality of the teacher, the class itself with all the peculiarities of every pupil in it, the moment in history, the education authorities and education laws prevailing at the place where the school wanting to implement the curriculum is located. All these factors modify the ideal curriculum and call for transformation and discussion. The educational task with which the growing human being confronts us can only be achieved if the curriculum remains mobile and pliable.*

**Caroline von Heydebrand**

### INTRODUCTION

The Cambridge Steiner School 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, 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 STATEMENT: OUR AIMS AND UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

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. We aim to effectively prepare our pupils for the

opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. 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 rich and carefully planned curriculum that enhances their own natural developmental growth. 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.

## **EARLY YEARS**

The Early Years teachers strive to build a bridge between home and school and to form a connection to each child's family. 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 most often are shared with family and friends.

Our school has operated a very popular and highly regarded Woodland kindergarten program since September 2009. Children from Elderflower and Rosebud Kindertartens spend one day per week in the nearby nature reserve. This outdoor experience has proved highly successful with both children and parents and is a very important aspect of our school kindergarten provision.

Many well-established kindergarten traditions are taken into the woodland setting, keeping the same strong sense of daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms. The children learn responsibility and respect for the world through making their own fire, food, shelters and handwork. A natural environment surrounds them, both beautifully simple and endlessly rich - the perfect place for discovery, creativity, and imagination to flourish.

Children in all kindertartens spend time outside in our lovely gardens and get to experience outdoor learning and play.

### **THE CAMBRIDGE STEINER SCHOOL HAS THE FOLLOWING EARLY YEAR GROUPS:**

#### **1. Parent and Child Groups (birth–2 ½ years)**

Our Parent and Child groups meet in a calm and homely atmosphere in school. Toddlers, babies and parents all enjoy creative play, seasonal crafts, songs and rhymes, snack time and a story. This is an ideal place to learn more about Steiner education and all families are warmly welcomed.

#### **2. Buttercups Little Kindergarten (2 to 3 ½ years)**

Buttercups Little Kindergarten is for children from 2 years old and is a safe, nurturing environment where emphasis is placed on rhythm and imitation – a place where young children can take their first steps into the social world as a gentle introduction to kindergarten life.

#### **3. Elderflower and Rosebud Kindertartens (3–6 years)**

Elderflower and Rosebud Kindergartens take children from the age of three up to and including the age of six years. Children are usually admitted in the term after their third birthday. The Kindergartens are mixed age groups, which have the advantage that children learn from each other, and take care of each other, just like in a family.

### **Early Years Curriculum**

The Early Years curriculum is structured to respond to and enhance the first seven years of childhood. It is considered vital to preserve and foster the vitality and imagination of the young child and so formal concepts are not taught during these years. However, the curriculum broadly integrates all subject areas within a day-to-day rhythm and the yearly flow of seasonal changes and major festivals.

The basic skills of numeracy and literacy constantly arise in the course of the curriculum but are not formally taught in Kindergarten. Solid foundations for language skills are laid in day-to-day storytelling, songs, rhymes, puppet shows and the personal interaction of each child. The teacher nurtures the children's power of imagination in the telling of carefully selected stories and helps them to experience many aspects of life more deeply by encouraging free play.

The basic skills emerge as children engage themselves in stacking, sorting, collecting, gathering, counting, clapping and game playing. Communication skills are fostered not just through oral language and daily interaction with teacher and peers but also in artistic expressions of painting, drawing and modeling. Listening skills are exercised daily during story time and interpretation manifests itself in the children's own role- playing and through acting out simple seasonal plays. Individuals engaging in social activity are what make up the Steiner Waldorf school day. A significant part of each morning is spent in the preparation and sharing of a meal and all the co-operation this entails. Problem-solving skills again are not fostered through formal instruction but primarily through the problems that naturally arise in a child's play.

Handwork such as sewing and weaving and craft activities are central to a Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten. These play an important role in developing fine motor skills in the child. Items are made as part of our preparation for festivals, for our nature garden, or for gifts to take home to parents.

The outdoor experience of the child is essential within the Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten. Being outdoors for a part of each morning fosters an understanding of the changing seasons and their different qualities. The children are encouraged to skip, run, climb and swing during their outside play, to enhance their healthy physical development. Also much is gained from planting and harvesting produce.

All children have a need to develop, which is supported by exploring and discovering the world around them. We plan opportunities that build on and extend all children's knowledge, experiences, interests and skills and develop their self-esteem and confidence in their ability to learn. We instill in the children a sense of wonder, an appreciation of beauty, and a connection to the natural environment.

Supporting curriculum documents for the Early Years:

- SWSF – The embedded Curriculum
- EYFS/Steiner Interpretation and Read-over
- EY Curriculum Documents

## The Statutory EYFS and Exemptions

The Statutory **Early Years Foundation Stage** (EYFS) Birth – 5 years, applies to all settings including ours. It sets out both learning and development requirements and safeguarding and welfare requirements for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. You can find out more about we meet the requirements of the EYFS in *the EYFS/Steiner Interpretation and Read-over and other documents* which you will find in your kindergarten. You can also find a *Parent's guide to the EYFS* on the government website <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk> Because there are areas which conflict with the Steiner Waldorf early childhood principles and practice, we have received some '**Exemptions and Modifications**' to the EYFS Learning and Development requirements and Assessment regulations under the '**Established Principles**' route for Steiner Waldorf settings. These are mostly to do with the introduction and in some cases formal teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and use of IT/media and electronic gadgetry. There is no exemption from the safeguarding and welfare requirements. (See list of **Exemptions and Modifications** in the kindergarten).

## 5-6 year olds Curriculum

Children over 5 are of statutory school age, and should be attending kindergarten full time (in full time education). We recognise that they need a more challenging experience, including raised expectations from the adults in the setting and a programme of work appropriate to their age, (Key Stage 1 in other school settings). In a Steiner school 'formal education' begins in Class 1. While there will be some activities and projects especially focused on these pre-school children, it is the new expectations of the staff relating to how the older children collaborate and contribute in a more structured and reliable way to the kindergarten community which is vital.

We have now collated all of this into curriculum documents for those children of statutory school age which shows progression from the EYFS, differentiation, what we expect of the older children and what and how they will learn through the curriculum provided. The documents describing the curriculum for this age are kept in the kindergarten. Parents will be kept informed of their child's developmental progress throughout their time in the kindergarten and will be asked to contribute to the observations and information about their child. (See policy on observations and assessment).

## LOWER SCHOOL

### Curriculum Development

The Lower School weekly Departmental Meetings are the forum in which teachers:

- Study and discuss aspects of the curriculum;
- Share questions and insights with colleagues;
- Consider the needs of the children in our care in relation to the curriculum indications;
- Share and evaluate lesson plans in relation to the curriculum indications. Class teachers regularly present to one another a review of their lessons: mistakes made, things discovered and new understandings. These are then discussed by the group.
- Identify possible improvements and development of the educational provision at the Cambridge Steiner School - recommendations will then be considered by the School Coordination Team.

### 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. 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 the Departmental Meetings.
- Prepare an Annual Plan before the beginning of each academic year.
- Prepare more detailed plans 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**

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 Department 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.

Please also read our Assessment Policy & Procedure.

### **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 teachers 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. 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 Lower School Coordinator. 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.

### **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 1&2, Class 5&6 and Class 7&8) and others are individual classes (Class 3 and Class 4). 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, Problem Solving, French, German, Eurythmy, Handwork, Outdoor Education and 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' (draft)
- Lower School Curriculum Outline (currently being developed)
- SWSF Literacy and Numeracy Framework
- Outdoor Classroom Handbook
- Lower School Subject Lesson Outcomes (draft)

## **DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

In a Steiner school mathematical aptitude, scientific understanding and the love of reading and writing are developed in every child in a slightly 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.

Recent research\* shows that there are great benefits in introducing formal learning around the age of 6 or 7. This is precisely when literacy teaching is introduced in Steiner Waldorf schools. By this age children have acquired a firm foundation in language development and have the necessary physical and social skills and a joy for learning.

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

### **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 pupils 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.

### **Continuity and routine**

Each teacher aims to stay with the class from Class 1 to Class 8. This allows teacher and pupil and teacher and parents to grow together and deepen their understanding of the child's educational needs as they progress through the school. The day begins with a two-hour 'main lesson' in which the class can explore a particular theme every morning for three to four weeks. The main lesson themes develop through the classes by addressing the changing needs of the growing child as expressed through Steiner's research.

### **Early languages**

Foreign languages are introduced in the kindergarten, and then taught from primary school onwards. Currently French and German are taught formally from Class 1 (age 6).

### **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 work place.

### **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 ARE:**

### **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.

### **Monitoring**

The Cambridge Steiner School teaches the International Steiner Waldorf Curriculum rather than the National Curriculum and pupils do not sit SATs tests. Instead their progress is regularly reviewed by the class and subject teachers, questions of child progress issues shared in Department 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.

### **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.

Please also see our Assessment Policy & Procedure and other supporting curriculum documents.