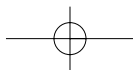
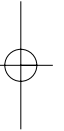
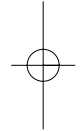


Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School

Parents Handbook

September 2009

Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School
64 Spylaw Road, Edinburgh EH10 5BR
www.steinerweb.org.uk



Contents

Introduction	3	Section 3: Policies and Rules	16
		Discipline	16
		Dress code	16
Section 1: The Organisation of the School	4	School rules	17
How the school is administered	4	Valuables	17
How the school is financed	5	Breakages	17
Communication	5	Insurance	17
Change of address	6	Child protection	17
Afternoon care	6	Confidentiality policy	18
School hours	6	Equal opportunities statement	18
		Bullying	18
		Health and safety	18
Section 2: The Education	7	Policy on theft	18
The aim and ethos of the school	7	Policy on tobacco, alcohol, drugs	19
Religious education	7	Complaints procedure	19
Festivals, assemblies and cultural life	7		
Additional support for learning	8	Section 4: Parental Involvement and Participation	20
Instrumental music lessons	8	Protocol for parent/teacher relationship	20
After school activities	9	Supporting your child's learning at home	21
Medical aspects	9	Participating in your child's class	23
The school doctor	9	The Parents', Teachers' and Carers' Association	24
Meals	10	Participating in the school as a whole	25
Television and computer games	10	Festivals and events	25
Safe Routes to School	10		
Trial periods	10	Teacher Training Course	27
Punctuality	11	Further Reading List	27
Leave of absence	12		
Lower School homework	12		
Upper School homework & detention	13		
Evaluation of pupils	13		
Carreers' education and guidance	14		
Pupils' requirement for class work	15		
School trips	15		

Introduction

Welcome to the Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School.

This handbook has been prepared with the aim of creating a document which will give you as parents, vital information about our school and the philosophy on which it is based.

In Sections 1 to 3 we hope to answer most of the common questions you may have. They include aspects about how the school is structured, organised and administered, the channels of communication that are open to you, information about policies and rules and how you can become involved in the wider school community. In Section 4 we give more detailed information about the background to the school, by familiarizing yourself with this, you will be able to give your child real support in their learning process.

We are always open to feedback, so if you have suggestions as to how things can be improved, please be in touch, either by contacting us directly via the School Office or through attending PTCA (Parents, Teachers and Carers Association) meetings.

For details on how to contact the PTCA and get involved, - read on ...

Section 1

The Organisation of the School

How the school is administered

The Trustees

The Trustees of the School are Trustees under the Memorandum and Articles of Association (constitution documents) of the Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School Trust Limited of 1947. The school is therefore a company limited by guarantee and is also a registered Scottish charity and is subject to the provisions of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 including supervision by The Office of the Scottish Regulator (OSCR).

The Trustees have final responsibility for all legal and financial aspects of the school including setting the level of School fees each session and staff salary levels.

All Trustees are volunteers and receive no payment or financial benefit for the work which they do. The Trustees meet in the evening of the first Tuesday of each month during term time and there are usually ten Trustees meetings during the course of the School session.

The Trustees can be contacted via the school Bursar.

The College of Teachers

As is usual in Steiner schools, the Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School does not have a hierarchical structure and does not have a head teacher. The educational policy-making body of this school is called the College of Teachers. All important educational decisions involving the school are finalised by the College. Decisions are reached by consensus of College members. The College of Teachers, (or College for short) is responsible for admissions, maintaining standards in the curriculum and all other areas relating to learning and teaching. The College is made up of

teachers who have been at the school for a number of years and have shown their commitment, their dedication to the philosophical principles of the school and who are willing to take responsibility for the school and its educational principles

There are a number of sub groups of the College with responsibility for such things as Maintenance, Staff Development, Festivals, Development etc.

The College meets each Thursday evening to deal with the many practical details of school life, to study together, and to share the rewards and problems of their work. On Wednesday afternoons there is a meeting for all teachers, when both educational and administrative topics are discussed. The tasks involved in running the school are shared by the teaching body as a whole.

The Management Group

Day to day running of the school is delegated to the Management Group. Three members of the College serve in rotation as the Management Group. It is the task of this group to prepare the College Agenda and see that decisions taken by the College are implemented. The Management Group also deals with day-to-day matters and holds an overview of the various groups within the school. Management members have different portfolio responsibilities. The school bursar is also a member of this group.

Other groups in the school

Anti-Bullying Group: This group looks at cases of bullying reported to it by a member of staff, parents or by pupils.

A detailed Anti-Bullying Policy can be obtained from the School Office or downloaded from the school's website.

House and Grounds Group: This group looks at the aesthetics of the school and oversees the maintenance and development of classrooms, buildings and grounds.

How the school is financed

The continued existence and well-being of the school depends on its financial and material needs being met by the school community.

Fees are due monthly by direct debit. Unpaid fees will incur interest at 10% per annum to cover the school's cost.

If parents wish to withdraw a child from the school, written notice is required one full term before the last day the child attends school. If parents do not do this, then fees for that child for the term following the date of withdrawal will be payable. Please also note that if a child is withdrawn during a term, the fee for that term is still payable.

A charge of £33 per term is made to cover basic stationery. This is reviewed yearly. There will be additional charges for such items as recorders, text books, atlases, craft materials, photocopying, class photographs, performances or special class excursions. There is also a charge for examination fees. Detailed information about current exam charges is available from the School Office. Payment for Charges and Outlays and Exam charges should be made by cheque, payable to the Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School Trust Limited and should be sent to the Bursar at 60 Spylaw Road, Edinburgh EH10 5BR.

Please note: A late fee may be applied to SQA examination entries which are made at the behest of candidates or parents after April 1st. An additional fee equivalent to approximately half the entry fee will also be charged by the other boards for each amendment or addition to the entries of existing candidates. The full scale of current charges is available at: *AQA: www.aqa.org.uk, OCR: www.ocr.org.uk*

Communication

Effective communication is essential for the harmonious life of the school. Parents are strongly encouraged to direct questions and concerns to the appropriate person as soon as they arise, so they can be dealt with quickly and openly.

Messages for teachers can be taken by the School Office and teachers will return your call as soon as it is convenient.

If you have questions or concerns regarding your child's experience at school, the curriculum, discipline, homework etc, the following steps are suggested:

If the child is in the Parent & Toddler Group or in the Kindergarten, speak to the teacher.

If the child is in the Lower School, contact the teacher in whose lesson there is a concern. If the question remains, speak to the class teacher. Alternatively speak to the class teacher who may refer you to the teacher in whose lesson the problem arose.

If the child is in the Upper School, contact either the class guardian or the subject teacher.

If after this the problem/question remains you can:

- Contact the Management Group by making an appointment, or by booking a slot at the weekly Management Surgery. Times of these are publicised through the "Tuesday Notice" (see below)
- Write to the College of Teachers.

For questions of school policy, procedures or concerns beyond the parent-teacher relationship, you can:

- Contact the Management Group
- Write to the College of Teachers

For matters concerning the class:

- Contact the class teacher
- Contact the class convenor

For matters concerning school events or how to become involved in the school, study groups or other general questions:

- Contact the PTCA

The office staff are a wealth of information and can often direct you to the person you need to speak to.

Communication to the Trustees should be sent to the Chair of Trustees, c/o the School Bursar.

Questions about financial matters should be directed to the school Bursar via the School Office.

At the beginning of each term an **Events Sheet** listing what has been planned for the term is sent to all parents. This includes dates for class parents' evenings.

Notices to parents giving details of coming events and other news are distributed via the pupils on Tuesdays during term time. This **Tuesday Notice** is sent out via email or your youngest child. It can also be downloaded from our website at www.steinerweb.org.uk. There may not be a notice every week, but parents are advised to ask their child every Tuesday whether one has been distributed. The School Office should be contacted in good time about the submission of items. Copy deadline is 10.30 am on Friday. Communication from the PTCA is also sent out with the Tuesday Notice. Letters sent via pupils on any other day will include a return slip to ensure receipt.

Change of Address

Please ensure that the School Office has up-to-date information on how to contact both parents, or others responsible, both at home or at work, as well as emergency phone numbers.

Afternoon Care

In recognition of the fact that many parents are unable to take their children home at lunchtime or once their school day is finished, we provide an afternoon care facility here at school. The times are reviewed every year and respond according to the parents' needs when it is cost effective. Children should bring their own packed lunch.

Booking forms are sent out at the start of the session, but may be collected from the office at any time. Times are booked on a regular basis and is charged for half-termly. No child may be left unless they have been pre-booked.

Current charges per child are available from the School Office

School Hours

School begins at 8.45 am for all children.

Pupils in Classes One to Twelve should be in school by 8.40 am. Kindergarten children should not be left before 8.35 am, by which time the teacher will be ready to receive them.

Kindergarten children finish at 12.40 pm and Class One children finish at 1:00 pm each day apart from one day when they finish at 3:15 pm

In Classes Two, Three, Four and Five there are some "half days" when children finish at 1:00 pm on other days they finish at 3:15 pm. Notice of which days are half days will be given at the beginning of the new session.

For curriculum and staffing reasons, classes in the middle school (Classes Six, Seven and Eight) may finish at 3:15 pm on some days and 4:00 pm on others.

Upper school classes can finish at either 3:15 pm or 4:00 pm, but may occasionally have a lesson until 4:45 pm.

If your child is absent from school for any reason please contact the School Office before 9 am.

Section 2

The Education

The aim and ethos of the school

The primary task of the Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School is to provide the best possible education for its pupils, so they may become not only knowledgeable, but also inwardly free, secure and creative adults.

Rudolf Steiner described his ideal of a comprehensive education as one that encompasses everyone regardless of social or religious background. The basis of this “art of education” was – and still is – a deep understanding of the human being and a recognition of the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs of the developing human being.

The philosophy (Anthroposophy) behind the education can be applied to all walks of life and it is out of this that the teachers work. The philosophy itself, however, is not taught to the children.

The broad curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the child at each stage of his/her development. The teacher is free within these guidelines, to present the subject material in an individual way that aims to awaken and enthuse the children, encouraging them to discover and learn for themselves. In this way the child is not educated solely in the “three Rs” but also in the “three Hs” – Hand, Heart and Head – the practical, feeling and thinking capacities. The school strives to provide an environment in which the child can find security, moral strength and confidence to face the challenges of life with initiative and responsibility.

Religious education

The mood of a young child is, by nature, perfect trust in its environment; it is in the deepest sense of the word “religious.” The purpose of the weekly religion lesson which starts in Class Two,

is to foster this natural reverence. As the child progresses through the school these religion lessons change in character. In accordance with the general curriculum, they aim to guide the children to an appreciation of the divine in the world and in the human being. Religion lessons are not seen as something separate from the rest of the curriculum, but rather provide a focus for the values, which are at the heart of our education. Morality – the consideration of good and evil – has a central place in Steiner education and is not simply “tacked on” in a weekly religion lesson.

Although the school is in essence Christian, and celebrates the Christian festivals of the year, it welcomes children of all faiths and denominations.

The rhythm of the year is marked out by the celebration of the festivals. The four cardinal points of the year:

Festivals, assemblies and cultural life

The way in which festivals are celebrated may vary from year to year, but often the Lower and Upper School will come together in the hall to present to each other items they have been preparing in their respective classes. We always try to strike an appropriately seasonal and festive note with these festival gatherings, and parents are usually invited to join us, though tickets may sometimes need to be booked in advance through the School Office. Details of this will be given through the Tuesday Notice, the school’s weekly newsletter. (For further information on the festivals see also under the appropriate heading in section four of this hand book).

Apart from the festivals, the school gathers together at least twice a term to share some aspect of their work.

There are many cultural events put on at the school, including plays, concerts and eurythmy performances. Some of these are brought to the school by touring artists, and are usually of a very high standard. Many are performed by our own pupils, such as the Class Eight play, school concerts, operas and Upper School dramatic presentations. The children always appreciate it when other parents as well as their own can support their efforts by attending their performances.

Before Christmas, the teachers perform two plays from the Oberufer cycle of Christmas Mystery Plays. These are offered as a gift to the pupils of the school from their teachers and are performed in the evening for parents and friends. All parents are invited to attend this unsophisticated presentation of the Christmas story.

Additional support for learning

The school has a small but excellent Learning Support Department. Pupils with additional support needs are identified through whole class screening assessment and through teacher and parental concerns. The Learning Support Department will then discuss appropriate means of support with the class teacher/guardian and the parents/guardians of the pupil. Sometimes they may wish to seek the advice of the school doctor (see below). Where appropriate, it may comprise Therapeutic Movement, Speech or Artistic work, as well as, or prior to, subject coaching. Besides the Learning Support specialists there are other teachers with qualifications and/or experience in this area who can contribute a limited amount of time to this work.

Support may be offered either in the classroom, in small extraction groups or individually. Additionally we may recommend help outside school.

All classes from one to ten have a full timetable, which has been arranged with a view to richness of content and a good balance of activities. Where learning support or therapeutic input is needed, something of the class programme will have to be missed, at least temporarily. When a pupil needs to miss a lesson regularly, we do our best to arrange the one that will be least problematic for that pupil. However, since the availability

of learning support is limited this is not always possible. Permission must always be sought from the teacher of the lesson to be missed, and the parents will be informed by either the class teacher or guardian. In general, the Eurythmy and the Religion lessons will not be chosen.

New pupils entering Classes 5–8

Modern languages

If a new pupil entering Classes Five to Eight comes to the School with no previous experience in the French and/or German languages, he/she will be expected to have weekly extra tuition in one or both languages. If tuition in both languages is needed, they will be offered in different terms so as not to overload the pupils. Extra tuition should continue until the child is integrated into the level of language learning that the class average has achieved.

The expense for extra tuition is assumed by the parents or guardians. Extra tuition lessons will be offered after school hours at the school although the parents/guardians are free to find their own teacher for this, as long as progress is consistent.

Any further questions about this should be directed to Emily Maclean.

Instrumental music lessons

As a school, we encourage pupils to take up musical instruments at the appropriate age. A small number of instrumental teachers come to the school and offer music lessons during school hours. Usually, however, instrumental lessons have to be arranged privately. The school keeps a small stock of instruments, which may be borrowed. From class five upwards, pupils who play instruments become eligible to play in the school orchestra which gives regular performances at assemblies and festivals.

If a pupil has private tuition or music lessons at school the teacher needs to be contacted at home if a lesson is to be missed for any reason (including attending a school event such as sports day or the performance of a play), otherwise that lesson may have to be charged. It is not sufficient to inform the class teacher or Office in this case.

After school activities

The Steiner curriculum aims to cover a wide range of activities for the pupils throughout each day. For those, however, who wish to extend their interest beyond school hours a number of opportunities exist, particularly in the realm of sport. Details of After School Clubs are available through the School Office.

Medical aspects

In this school a child's general medical care is held to be the responsibility of the child's parents. There are no routine health inspections such as take place in some other schools, and we do not arrange for children to have inoculations at school.

There are first aid points in all the school's main buildings. The administration for first aid is under the supervision of members of staff. Only homeopathic remedies are used. There is a sick bay facility in Edinholme. However, sick beds are for temporary use only, because pupils who are too unwell to attend lessons for the rest of their school day, or those who have sustained an injury requiring more than first aid, should return to their parents' care with the minimum of delay. In cases of injury needing hospital attention we will seek to inform parents immediately, but if parents cannot be contacted in an emergency we will see that the injured pupil is accompanied to hospital. It is important that parents keep the School Office up to date with their daytime contact numbers and pertinent details of their children's health. A medical/emergency contact form is provided for this information.

If illness prevents a pupil from attending school, parents are requested to inform the Office before 9:00 am on the first day of absence and to send a written note on the day the pupil returns to school. When a pupil is unwell for more than a few days parents should keep the class teacher or guardian informed of the position.

If your child has been in contact with or develops an infectious disease (for instance, measles, whooping cough etc.) they should not attend school.

The school doctor

The School Doctor is a fully qualified medical practitioner who is also a specialist in Anthroposophical Medicine. He visits the school several times a year. His knowledge and insights are very helpful to both teachers and parents, going beyond the usual medical treatment of symptoms. In keeping with our educational approach, he takes into account the development of the whole child. Because his visits are widely spaced he cannot undertake to treat acute illnesses which need on-going supervision.

All appointments are made by the Appointments Secretary. Requests for these should come through the Kindergarten teacher, class teacher or guardian responsible for the pupil. The present Appointments Secretary is Jennifer Stephens.

All children entering Class One will be seen by the Learning Support Specialist for a general assessment of learning readiness. At this point questions may arise on which we would wish to consult the School Doctor. A Kindergarten teacher, class teacher or guardian may ask for a pupil to be seen by the Doctor at any stage during their schooling.

For all pupils under 16 years of age it is essential that the consent of the parents be obtained before an appointment is requested. Older pupils may ask their class guardian to request an appointment. Their parents will normally be informed of this, unless the pupil specifically wishes otherwise.

A first appointment takes fifty minutes and it is essential for a parent (or another adult in loco parentis) to be present. Subsequent appointments are shorter and the presence of the parent is not always necessary though they may attend if they wish.

If parents wish an appointment to be made for their child they should ask the relevant Kindergarten or class teacher or guardian to make the request.

Meals

Class 12 provide school lunches which can be booked on a daily basis via the class teacher in the Lower School. In the Upper school they can be purchased at lunch times by the pupils themselves or pre-ordered on the list that is available in the classroom at the beginning of the day. The cost is generally £1.50 and a weekly menu is available at the beginning of the week. Those parents who do not wish their child to order a school lunch are asked to provide their children with a packed lunch. In the interests of healthy eating we would ask you to provide wholesome, nourishing food and to keep pre-packed, convenience foods to a minimum. In the Lower School, crisps, chocolate bars and canned drinks are not permitted on normal school days.

Television and computer games

The experience of teachers is that exposure to television and computer games can significantly interfere with the educational work of the school. This is found to be true for all ages, but is especially so for younger children.

Although television may have a justified place in the life of an adult, television viewing for children is now becoming acknowledged as impairing strength and creativity, as well as interfering with healthy social development and weakening academic performance. It is preferable for small children not to watch television at all; the younger the child the more pronounced will be the effect.

Computers have become a part of everyday life, and the school's computing facilities are an integral part of the Upper School curriculum. However, when children become attracted to computer games, their hands, eyes and attention become increasingly focused upon a small area just a short distance in front of them. As more time is spent on computer games, less is spent on developing broader social and physical abilities that are essential for healthy growth.

For all these reasons, both television and computer games are felt to impede the work of the school.

(For more information on this important topic see also section four of this handbook)

Safe Routes to School

The school actively supports the national Safe Routes To School Initiative. The aims of which are to:

- Enable children to be safe and to feel safe walking or cycling to and from school.
- Encourage parents to consider alternatives to driving their children to school.
- Improve pedestrian and road safety, and environmental quality for all.

While recognising that many people travel great distances to the school, thus relying on a car, we would still encourage parents to use other means of transport i.e. bus, bike, walk or car share if at all possible. The PTCA is continually working on issues of road safety relevant to our school, for example, traffic calming on Spylaw Road, safer crossing on Polwarth Terrace and the upgrading of the canal cycle path.

The school also offers cycling proficiency tests. If any parent has a particular interest in this area, please contact the PTCA. A copy of the school's Travel Plan can be obtained through the School Office.

Trial periods

Kindergarten

At the interview stage it is clearly stated that every child is on a term's trial. It is also made clear that communication between the parents and teacher is vital.

When a child has been interviewed and it is clear, prior to or during the interview, that the child has obvious social, emotional, physical or educational problems, the parents are told that they will receive a letter outlining our conditions of acceptance. When necessary, it is stated that the child will be under continual review and may be asked to leave before the trial period has ended, if the school is not able to meet the child's needs.

It is noted, when appropriate, that should the child pass the trial period, it is not automatic that he/she will continue on to Class One. In such cases regular contact with the parents will occur, keeping them informed of the progress of their child.

In the instance of problems arising during (and after) the trial period:

1. The child is brought to the Kindergarten meeting so their needs can be looked at in depth.
2. Concerns about the child and how the parents can best support the teacher, are shared with the parents.
3. When little or no support from the parent is given; or if it is felt we cannot meet the child's difficulties, College will be informed.
4. A meeting with the parents' respective teacher and a College member (in most instances, another Kindergarten teacher) will take place, during which a full picture of the child will be shared

A letter will be sent outlining the points raised, after the meeting.

College will be informed of the outcome and for a final decision to be made.

Lower School

Every pupil joining the school begins with a term's Trial Period and at the end of this period the following points will be used at the review. This list is intended as a guide for new pupils and their parents.

1. Social integration into the class is important and it is expected that new pupils endeavour to find their place with the class.
2. The pupil is willing and co-operative with teachers and does work and assignments consistently. Work is kept up-to-date and is of the pupil's best standard.
3. The attendance record should be fully satisfactory and there should not be any unaccounted for absences from school (either full or part day or missed lessons). All absences due to illness must be detailed in writing by the parents and sent to the class teacher immediately after the absence period. Absences for other reasons should be requested in advance by writing to the College of Teachers.
4. Homework is done regularly and handed in on time (if this is not possible a note must be written by the parents to explain the circumstances that prevent the assignment from being completed).
5. Pupils are expected to familiarise themselves with School Rules and keep to them.

Please note: The school reserves the right to curtail the Trial Period in situations where there is a serious breakdown of co-operation with the above points.

Upper School

Every pupil joining the school begins with a term's Trial Period and at the end of this period the following points will be used at the review. This list is intended as a guide for new pupils and their parents.

1. The pupil is willing and co-operative with teachers and does work and assignments consistently. Work is kept up-to-date and is of the pupil's best standard and shows endeavour.
2. Homework is done regularly and handed in on time (if this is not possible a note must be written by the parents to explain the circumstances that prevented the assignment from not being completed).
3. The attendance record should be fully satisfactory and there should not be any unaccounted absences from school (either full or part day or missed lessons). All absences due to illness must be detailed in writing by the parents and sent to the class guardian/teacher immediately after the absence period. Absences for other reasons should be requested in advance to the College of Teachers.
4. Pupils are expected to familiarise themselves with School Rules and keep to them.
5. Social integration into the class is important and it is expected that new pupils do their best to achieve this.

Please note: The school reserves the right to curtail the Trail Period in situations where there is a serious breakdown of co-operation.

Punctuality

Among the special aspects of a Steiner school is the need for a strong social environment that is provided by parents working together to support the educational work. The school considers punctuality to be of vital importance.

If teachers and parents are punctual, the children will learn reliability and respect for others; habits that will last into later life. It is therefore expected that parents will help provide uninterrupted and punctual attendance at school. To

arrive late for the start of school or for individual lessons is not only inconsiderate towards others in the class and disruptive to the flow of the lesson but, if allowed to continue, can give rise to the formation of habits that may be hard to break later in life.

Kindergarten

When a child arrives late at Kindergarten he/she may find settling in difficult and the rhythm of the day will have been disrupted for all the children. Parents are therefore requested to make every effort to ensure their children are at school on time. It is also very important to collect your child punctually. It can be upsetting for young children to be left behind after their friends have already gone home. The teachers are also busy with meetings and other commitments in the afternoon.

The period before school begins is the time for the teacher to prepare for the entire class. To be asked to look after one or two children at this time means their attention is taken away from this preparation. Before and after school hours, when the parents are still present, they are responsible for the children in their care

Lower School

In the Lower School we consider it the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at 8.40 am for an 8.45 am start. Class teachers will monitor punctuality and take appropriate measures in cases of repeated lateness, all pupils arriving after the register has been taken *must* report to the School Office to get a lateness slip. If a child is late more than 3 times in a term, a letter will go out to parents. If a child is late for a further three occasions, parents will be asked to meet with the Management Group to work out what can be done to remedy the situation.

Upper School

In the Upper School we believe that the pupils share the responsibility for being punctual.

Pupils should be at school by 8:40 am.

If a pupil is late they must report to the School Office to get a lateness slip. Three morning latenesses within a term will result in a detention, which will involve physical work in the garden. If

further latenesses occur beyond this sanction the matter will be looked into by the Management Group and a meeting with parents will be called. Lateness to subject lessons will also incur a detention.

If there is a genuine reason for lateness, parents should notify the School Office by telephone or with a signed note.

Pupils who have a long and difficult journey involving unreliable public transport, will be given special consideration on an individual basis.

Leave of Absence

If your child needs to miss a day or part of a day of school for some event which cannot be arranged outside school hours, a written note should be sent in advance to the class teacher or guardian.

If your child needs to be off school for more than a day for any reason other than health or bereavement, Leave of Absence must be obtained from the College of Teachers at least two weeks prior to the date for which it is requested.

Leave of Absence is normally only granted:

- (a) For unusual family circumstances
- (b) For attendance of events with some educational basis
- (c) On grounds of compassion
- (d) For reasons of health

Leave of Absence will not be granted for purely recreational or entertainment purposes.

Parents are advised not to make bookings or travel arrangements until leave of absence has been granted.

Lower School homework

There is no set homework in Classes 1 and 2, though the children may be asked to practise the skills they are learning and individual tasks may occasionally be set.

Homework usually begins in Class 3 and from then on will gradually increase, until by the end of the Lower School, pupils will be expected to complete at least one piece of maths, one piece of English, one French and one German per week. Pupils will also be expected to keep up-to-date with their main lesson work.

Projects and book reviews are set regularly

from Class 4, and these will usually be set in addition to the other homework. The exact amount of homework will be at the discretion of the class teacher, who will ensure that the homework is spread evenly throughout the week.

Class teachers and parents work together to make sure that homework is handed in on time.

From Class 5 upwards, failure to hand in homework on time may result in homework detention. The time and place for such a detention will be communicated to the parents via the class teacher.

Upper School homework & detention

In the Upper School failure to hand in homework will result in detention. The detention system for the Upper School is outlined below:

All detentions will take place in the detention room, currently the Geography Room

The pupils attending detention must bring the signed detention slip and a pen.

Evaluation of pupils

Regular and open communication between parents and teachers is a vital aspect of Steiner education.

Evaluation is a continuous process and parents should feel free to ask the teacher at any time how their child is getting on. The termly parents' evenings are also an opportunity for parents to see the children's work and to hear about their progress from the Class teacher and other subject teachers.

At the end of each school year, a written report is sent out for each child. These narrative reports,

Offence	Punishment	Action by teacher
<i>In lessons</i> Misbehaviour Rudeness Lateness Non-presentation of homework Eating/drinking Lack of necessary books / equipment	Warning Lunchtime detention (1.10–1.45)	Issue detention slip. Add name to detention register.
<i>In school</i> Missing a lesson Breaking school rules Chewing gum Handling mobile phone Failure to bring full gym kit	Lunchtime detention (1.10–1.45)	Issue detention slip. Add name to detention register.
Missed / late for detention Detention slip not signed Misbehaviour in detention 3 x lunch detention	Wednesday morning detention (8.00–8.40)	Issue detention slip. Add name to detention register. Inform guardian (letter home).
2 x Wednesday detention	Possible suspension	Refer to Management Group

Upper School detention policy

intended more for the parents of the younger children and for both parent and child as the child grows older, aim to give a picture of the pupil's development, his or her strengths and weaknesses, areas of progress and potential for the future. For the Upper School reports are sent out twice a year, at the end of the Autumn Term and at the end of the session. The class guardian is responsible for the collation of reports. Reports aim to be comprehensive, but they cannot take the place of regular meetings between parents and teacher for an objective discussion of the pupil's performance.

Meetings can be set up at either the parent's or teacher's initiative; and, at either's initiative, a home visit can take place, which is mutually beneficial and helps foster the relationship between home and school.

Examinations and testing

Pupils' progress is assessed through a consideration of their whole development, which includes social and artistic capacities as well as academic performance. Neither formal tests nor examinations feature in the life of a Lower School child. The joy of learning is its own motivation force in these middle years of childhood.

Because it is necessary for a teacher to ascertain that children have learned what the teacher set out to teach, tests in various subjects occur in the older classes. The emphasis, however, is always on how pupils have performed in terms of their own ability rather than measuring them against that of their classmates.

Subject lessons are brought to examination standard in Class 10 (age 15-16yrs) and pupils select subjects for the GCSE, Standard Grade or Intermediate 1 and 2 exams as appropriate to their academic ability. Up to four subjects are taken in Class 10 leaving others to be taken the following year. Thus, by spreading the load over two years, we are able to continue with the Steiner curriculum of Main Lessons and subject lessons throughout the Upper School, as well as providing the pupils with the opportunity to prepare for public examinations. SQA Higher Grade examinations are taken at the end of Class 12 (age 17-18yrs).

The School is an official centre for the SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority), The AQA

(The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance) and OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations) boards.

At the end of Class Ten all the pupils do two weeks' work experience in an area of their choice.

Many of our pupils go on to further education, whilst many choose other paths to follow. Our aim is to enable the young people who leave our school to make free choices based on sound judgement.

Careers education and guidance

Teaching and Learning

Structured Career Education lessons are given within the Main Lesson programme as well as PSE and guardian lessons. Class 9 pupils are introduced to the world of work, C.V.s, etc. Class 10 has lessons to help prepare them for choosing their Class 11 & 12 courses. Individual interviews take place with Class 10 pupils during the second term of the session. Class 10 pupils take part in a two week period of work experience at the end of the third term after the examinations have finished. Interviews take place with Class 11 pupils, carried out by ISCO. Class 12 pupils have approximately five individual interviews during the first term of the session. They also have input from ISCO.

Activities

Outside the classroom, pupils have the opportunity to visit Careers and Higher Education Conventions, Gap Fairs and University Open Days as well as take part in the Young Enterprise Scheme and Career Experience Courses. As a member of ISCO (Independent Schools Careers Organisation) all Upper School pupils are offered the Futurewise service. This entails a preparatory questionnaire, psychometric tests, a feedback session by the Scottish Director of ISCO and a one to one interview.

Pupils' requirement for class work

Lower School

Please refer to the list of your child's class issued to you via the School Office and check with your child's teacher for any possible amendments.

Classes 6, 7 and 8

In addition to the issued list, French and German dictionaries and Grammar books will be provided by the school and charged to the pupil's account.

One A4 binder with a divider for French and German

Upper School:

As classes 6 - 8 above plus:

2H lead pencil,

360 degree protractor.

A4 lined file paper.

Four A4 wallet files.

A scientific calculator will be required towards the end of Class 9, but please hold back with this until you are notified which kind to get.

We strongly advise all materials (including crayons and pencils) be labelled with the child's name or initials.

Stockists:

Most items can be purchased from the school shop at the Friday Market.

The Mulberry Bush, 77 Morningside Road (447 5145) also stocks various items

Caran d'ache "Neocolour II" water soluble crayons are available in boxes or singly from Greyfriars Art Shop, 1 Greyfriars Place, (225 4600).

Gym Kit

Class 2 - 4 plim-soles only

Class 5 upwards will require a school gym kit. Shorts, T-shirt and a pair of indoor trainers are essential.

Tracksuit trousers and sweatshirts are optional extras. All items are available via the school shop. For information on how to acquire these items, please contact the School Office.

School trips

School trips form an important part of the curriculum. They widen the educational experience and the whole class is expected to take part. The class teacher, guardian or subject teacher will send out a form giving information and requesting your permission for each trip, and it is vital that you return this form, or else let the teacher know if your child cannot go with the class.

Parents are expected to contribute towards the additional costs of these trips, both via extra payments and through fundraising activities which benefit the class fund. One of the purposes of the class fund is to assist with the costs of the trips, either in part for each class member or in full where the family cannot meet the cost.

In Class 5 the curriculum deals with ancient Greece. The children take part in an organized Olympic Games camp at Michael Hall Rudolf Steiner School in Sussex, where many class 5s come together.

Below is an outline of trips and excursions

class by class: this may vary from year to year

Class 1: Whole or half day outing into nature

Class 2: Whole or half day outing into nature

Class 3: A number of day trips to include visits to: a farm, a mining museum, a fishing museum.

Class 4: A number of whole or half day outings to explore local geography; An overnight trip staying at a youth hostel for 1 or 2 nights

Class 5: Greek 'Olympics': June: 4 days.

Class 6: Hadrian's Wall: 2/3 days or 'outward bound' trip: 2/3 days.

Class 7: Outward bound exploration: 2/3 days.

Class 8: Class exchange: May/June: 4-6 weeks: German or French-speaking country.

Class 9: Work on a farm: May/June: 1 week; Geology and Biology field trips.

Class 10: Work experience: June: 2 weeks; various field trips connected to Main Lessons.

Class 11: Surveying: June: approx 1 week; various field trips connected to Main Lessons; careers visits.

Class 12: Emerson Class Conference: July; Class Trip: July approx. 2 weeks various field trips connected to Main Lessons; careers' visits.

Section 3

Policies and Rules

Policies and rules can be seen as common understandings and agreements that allow everyone to participate in the purpose of the school, which is to educate children. Rules are pedagogically based and are the result of many years experience. In addition, rules support your family by helping with the inevitable peer pressures that arise as part of growing up. More than anything, the rules are intended to support children on their educational journey towards freedom by teaching them about responsibility, always, of course, in an age appropriate way.

It is very important that the family and school work together with common and agreed values and we earnestly seek your support in the application of the school rules.

Discipline

Where there is a good human understanding between teacher and pupil, discipline arises naturally. Problems may occur when this understanding breaks down for one reason or another. If a child behaves in an unacceptable way, the teacher must find a way to help the child with this. In the case of young children, an appropriate story may be told; through which the child becomes more conscious of why their action has distressed others. In some cases, Lower School pupils may be sent to a younger class to be supervised by their teacher, but only if that will not disrupt *that* class.

The school's policy for dealing with more persistent or more serious cases is available through the School Office or from your child's class teacher/guardian.

Dress Code

As the school does not have a uniform, the requirements for school dress are based on considerations of health, neatness and cleanliness together with practicality and suitability for school. Therefore we seek the co-operation of parents and pupils in steering a course between strict formality and casualness. Consequently we would consider the following unsuitable for school:

- Clothing which is badly worn, torn or heavily soiled
- Clothing displaying pictures or slogans. Please note the only writing on garments which is acceptable is the maker's logo, and then when no more than 10 cm at its widest point
- Sports team tops or football shirts
- Military garments or similar uniforms
- Garments which reveal a bare midriff i.e. low slung trousers or skirts or cropped tops
- Garments which do not cover the upper torso/shoulders properly i.e. vest tops with thin shoelace straps
- Mini skirts. That is, skirts with a hem more than 6 inches above the knee
- Any facial piercings (apart from earrings) including nose or eyebrow studs/bars/rings and any piercings in the area of the mouth
- Any tattoos on conspicuous parts of the body eg. hands, arms, neck etc
- Dark glasses or sunglasses (unless required for medical reasons and in such a case the school must be notified).

Please note:

- Sportswear is not allowed in class outside PE or sports lessons
- Woolly hats, baseball caps and all other forms of headgear are not to be worn in class

Clothing should be sufficiently warm so that outer garments, jackets, coats and anoraks need not be worn in class under normal circumstances

Patterned fabrics are permissible.

Only trainers, plimsolls or eurythmy shoes are to worn in the gym hall.

All articles of clothing/equipment must be clearly marked with the owner's name. The school cannot take responsibility for lost belongings or clothing.

Jewellery and make up

Lower School: Pupils are not permitted to wear any make-up (including unnatural hair colourants and nail varnish). Jewellery is not allowed below Class 7, except for sleepers which may be worn in pierced ears.

Any jewellery worn in classes 7 and 8 must be in moderation and be in keeping with the guidelines set out by the class teacher.

Upper School: Pupils are required to ensure that their dress, make-up and jewellery (if worn) are within moderate bounds and in keeping with the considerations above.

Infringement of the above dress code will incur a detention and/or parents will be informed.

For further information please also see Section 4 of this handbook

School Rules

We expect that every pupil will be considerate of others and try their hardest when they are in and out of School.

1. Pupils should feel safe and free from words and actions that intentionally, or otherwise, hurt others.
2. In class every pupil has the right to partake in the lesson free of interruptions and distractions.
3. Pupils should be protected from activities that may cause physical or mental harm.
4. Pupils should actively promote good "Health & Safety" practice.
5. Pupils must follow the School Rules in order to make the above rights and freedoms available
6. Mobile phones should be turned off within School Grounds.

For more details and an interpretation of the Rules and Dress Code: contact the School Office.

Valuables

It is unwise for pupils to come to school with valuables or more money than they need; and for obvious reasons money and such things as calculators should not be left unattended in a desk or cloakroom. When necessary, a teacher can hold something in safe-keeping until the end of the school day, or it may be left in the School Office.

Breakages

In cases where a breakage is directly attributable to a pupil's misconduct, the parent(s) of that pupil will be asked to cover the costs of any repairs that may be needed.

Insurance

The school's liability insurance covers the school in cases where the school has been proven to be negligent.

The school does not hold a Personal Accident Policy to cover pupils in cases of injury or accident at school.

Parents should consider whether they wish to cover this contingency themselves.

Forms giving details of various schemes are available from the School Office.

Child protection

The school's policies on child protection follow the guidelines issued by Edinburgh City Council and those published by SCIS (Scottish Council for Independent Schools) These guidelines are available and may be viewed in the School Office.

The school has a Child Protection Co-ordinator and Deputy and they advise staff and those with concerns as to the appropriate course of action. Please enquire at the School Office if you wish to know who holds these posts at present. All staff receive regular training in issues of child protection.

All allegations brought to the school's attention are taken seriously and dealt with

confidentially in as far as they can within the criteria outlined in the confidentiality policy (see confidentiality policy section).

Any parent with a concern for the welfare of any pupil can contact any member of staff about the concern. It is best if an appointment to meet about the issues can be arranged, this is better than trying to discuss the matter on the phone. It is helpful if as much detail as possible can be provided of any evidence on which this concern is based.

Confidentiality policy

The policy of the school is to work in partnership with parents in order to promote the welfare of the children. The school also aims to build up relationships of trust with the children. Children and parents should feel able to raise with the school concerns about safety and welfare in the knowledge that these will be dealt with sensitively.

Because of the sensitivity of these issues, the school operates on the presumption that anything imparted in confidence will be treated in confidence. This is subject to three qualifications:

Anything imparted "in confidence" to one member of staff or person approached as an associate of the school, may be shared with a restricted number of colleagues if that person feels the need of support and guidance from them.

If serious concerns are raised about the safety or welfare of a child, the person approached may be obliged, in terms of the school's child protection procedures, to pass that information to one of the school's Child Protection Co-ordinators for consideration as to whether it should be shared with the appropriate authorities.

The school must, of course, pass on information when legally obliged to do so, for example by a court of law.

Children must also feel able to share concerns with staff. Problems may arise when a child consults a member of staff about a problem and does not want that information to be shared with parents. Whilst staff will try to encourage children to share the information with parents where that is appropriate, there may be circumstances in which any pressure to pass the information on could

result in the child keeping the problem to him or herself or not sharing concerns in the future.

Teachers should never discuss information about one child with the parents of another child.

Equal opportunity statement

The school recognises and has regard for the child's religious background, ethnic origins, and cultural and linguistic background, so that each child is valued as an individual without racial or gender prejudice.

Bullying

The school does not condone bullying under any circumstances, be it physical or psychological in nature.

Any report of an incident of bullying, whether from a child, a concerned parent or a member of staff, will be taken seriously. Any child who sees or hears of another child being bullied is encouraged to report it to a teacher.

All teachers have responsibility to initially investigate every reported incident and to inform class teachers or class guardians. After this initial investigation it will be decided whether the incident should be reported to the Anti-Bullying Group. (See Groups in the school under section 1 of this hand book)

It is the responsibility of class teachers and guardians to do their utmost to stop any bullying which they become aware of in their class.

The manner in which each case is dealt with will depend on the circumstances and the individual children involved, but the above principles should be adhered to at all times.

Health and safety

Our comprehensive Health & Safety Policy can be viewed in the School Office

Policy on theft

When a theft is discovered, every effort will be made to find out how it occurred and to get the pupil to own up. This will be done by addressing whole classes, talking to individual pupils, or to

groups of pupils. Class teachers/guardians will be involved at this stage.

Sometimes confidentiality has to be respected, but pupils' own sense of right and wrong should be appealed to. The police may be informed, depending on the nature of the theft.

Once some of the relevant facts have been gathered, parents can be informed and further discussions may take place if appropriate. Where necessary other staff members will be informed of the incident.

Although each case is different, it is normal to expect money or goods to be returned and for those concerned to undertake some community work within the school.

School trips are regarded in the same way as being at school. Incidents of theft out of school are rare, but it could be that the school becomes involved and it would then work with the parents and the police in order to resolve the situation.

Policy on tobacco, alcohol, drugs

One of the aims of the school is that pupils should abstain from drugs and other harmful substances as a matter of personal choice. Guidance and advice is provided to this end. However, circumstances arise and temptations occur. This is the current school policy on this issue:

Drugs are defined as all legally banned or age-restricted substances, plus any substance (or usage) specifically proscribed by the school. The school reserves the right to proscribe substances or usages in addition to those legally banned or on which legislation may be pending. (e.g. glue, lighter fuel).

Tobacco and alcohol

These may not be consumed during school hours or during school functions on the premises, nor should they be consumed off the premises within the vicinity of the school, immediately before or after school hours or during school evening functions.

Any pupil who does not comply with this, or is in the company of someone not complying is liable to face disciplinary action.

Drugs

The possession and/or use of drugs and other illegal substances on the school premises is strictly forbidden.

In the event of a pupil or pupils being suspected of possessing and/or using drugs or other illegal substances, whether on or off the school premises, the school may follow one or more of the following options:

Initiate action to ascertain the relevant facts and circumstances.

Inform the parents of the pupil(s) involved.

Suspend the pupil(s) concerned.

Inform the police

Inform the parents of other pupils in the same class(es) as the suspected pupil(s).

All these considerations will depend upon the individual circumstances of each case.

Other possibilities such as reparation in the form of work inside or outside the school will also be considered.

Permanent exclusion is automatic for those who have previously offended, irrespective of the time or place of the offence. This includes overseas students if it comes to the school's notice that they have offended in their home school.

In the event of a pupil or pupils being found in possession of or using drugs or other illegal substances during school hours or on school premises, the school will normally immediately permanently exclude the pupils concerned.

This policy may be amended from time to time at the discretion of the College of Teachers. The PTCA will be part of this process.

Complaints procedure

Informal procedure:

The maintenance of a good working relationship between children, teachers and parents is a vital ingredient of successful education. Inevitably, differences of perception do occur and these put a strain on relationships from time to time.

Whilst every circumstance is different and must be examined on its own terms, it is helpful to set out the general procedures which apply to addressing problems and complaints. Prevention is always better than cure, and parents are

requested to tackle problems as they emerge and not let them fester. Of course, not all problems can be solved, but often, frankness, humility, humour and a little imagination can help transform a situation, in some cases patience is the essential ingredient.

The first point of contact in registering concern would be direct to the Kindergarten/class teacher or guardian of your child. If that is difficult for some reason, a member of the Management Group should be approached. This may be done either in person, by phone via the School Office or by booking an appointment for the Management-Surgery. Times for this are announced through the Tuesday Notice. The Management Group will consider what action is appropriate. They may take the matter to the College of Teachers or perhaps a meeting between the parties concerned will be set up. For matters with school-wide implications, or issues concerning school policy, a member of the Trustees can be contacted. If the above informal approach cannot be adopted, or if it has not been effective in clearing up the problem, the Formal Complaints procedure outlined below should be adopted.

Formal Procedure

1. A parent registers with one member of staff a complaint about another member of staff.

The parent should be asked if the matter has been taken up with the member of staff concerned, and if not already done, this should be suggested. If this is not possible, the parent should

be asked to put the complaint in writing and send it promptly to the Management Group.

2. Upon receipt, the Management Group should:

- (a) take up the issues raised in the letter with the member of staff concerned
- (b) consider with the member of staff the most appropriate response and act upon it.

3. If an obvious and easy solution is not forthcoming, a meeting between the two parties should be arranged promptly by at least two members of the Management Group. Depending on the nature and strength of the complaint, this could take place either:

- (a) with the Management Group representative; or
- (b) with the Management Group representative; and a representative parent nominated by the PTCA

4. If the problem is still not resolved, the two representatives should prepare a report for the College of Teachers. This should be shown to both parties in advance.

The College of Teachers should then consider the matter, preferably within two weeks, and arrive at a final decision.

5. In the case of Kindergarten parents, they may at any point contact the Care Commission (0131-653 4100/4123/4151) Care Commission Officer, Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care.

Section 4

Parental Involvement and Participation

Children are more likely to thrive when there is a close relationship between home and school.

Parents are invited and encouraged to become a part of the school community, thereby creating a strong social environment to support the educational work of the school. While the amounts of time any particular family can give will vary according to individual circumstances, all are asked to share what they can and make this school experience a priority for both the children and their families.

Protocol for teacher/parent relationship

The relationship between teachers and parents is based upon their common aim which is to actively support and guide the children in their development and education. This will best be achieved when the relationship that exists is one of mutual respect and understanding. Frank and open communication is of immense importance in establishing the trust that should grow between them.

Every class in the school is composed of children who come together daily from a wide variety of families, homes and cultural and religious backgrounds. What they experience as a group is the Steiner/Waldorf curriculum as interpreted and presented to them by their teachers. While the standards of behaviour, conventions and habits and expectations may therefore in many cases differ from those required at home, children will readily adapt to such differences so long as they feel the mutual support of both teachers and parents.

Disagreements and misunderstandings may sometimes occur between teachers and parents.

While these must be settled as soon as possible, it is also important to find an appropriate moment

to discuss these matters and the teachers should be telephoned in order to arrange this.

At times a teacher may request some parental help in the classroom. This is very much appreciated by both teachers and children. Parents may not however be present during a lesson without the prior consent of the teachers in charge.

If a message, an item of equipment, lunch box etc needs to be delivered to a pupil or a teacher during school hours, it should be brought to the School Office rather than directly to the classroom so that lessons are disturbed as little as possible.

As parents, you participate in the life of the school by:

- Supporting your child's learning at home.
- Participating with the teachers and parents in your child's class.
- Participating in the school as a whole.

Supporting your child's learning at home

We have only to look back to our own childhood to recall the important part that home life played in our own growth and development.

Daily rhythm

From Kindergarten through to Upper School, Rudolf Steiner education provides a well-defined daily rhythm for the school day, week and year so that children have a secure framework in which to learn. A consistent daily cycle at home complements this aspect of school life, with well-defined times for getting up in the morning, meals and going to bed.

Homework is given in the Middle and Upper School years, and your interest, encouragement,

and support for a regular study routine at home will benefit your child enormously.

Pupils need to be fresh and alert to work hard at our school, so a healthy diet, and sound and adequate sleep are very important to support your child's learning.

Main Lesson subjects are taught in blocks which usually build one upon the other. The rhythm of daily, weekly and seasonal cycles also forms an important part of the life of the school. For these reasons, experiences missed through absence cannot easily be made up at a later time, especially at the beginnings and endings of terms.

School dress

The school has no uniform, and the requirements for school dress are based on a consideration of health, neatness, cleanliness and suitability for work at school. While it may be difficult to resist the pressures of advertising and fashion, nevertheless both parents and children are asked to co-operate with the school in steering a sensible course between strict formality and ultra-casualness, for the following reasons:

1. We strive to create a beautiful environment in the classrooms and in the buildings. We would like the children's manner of dress to be in keeping with this, avoiding logos, harsh colours and day-glow, which disturb this harmonious environment.
2. We aim to teach children that they are not "walking advertisements". We endeavour to create a space for the children that is free of commercialism and where there is not a constant barrage of media-imposed consumer images such as media characters,
3. The child's own imagination should stimulate and direct his/her play. Super heroes and big logos on clothing can influence and inhibit the development of a healthy imagination.

For the above reasons the College strongly requests parents' co-operation in ensuring that children are dressed in accordance with the dress code. (See Section 3 for more detail.)

Younger children especially are advised to wear strong shoes with a firm sole, so that their feet develop healthily and normally. In bad weather, all pupils should have waterproof footwear.

Trainers with soft soles, which may be appropriate for games lessons, are not suitable for wearing throughout the day.

Healthy body, healthy mind — the importance of nutrition

Healthy food is a prerequisite for a healthy life and a healthy outlook; it's no coincidence that the terms "health" and "well-being" are so often bracketed together. As part of its wider ethos, the school makes a commitment to the nutritional needs of its pupils. Healthier pupils are more likely to perform better and less likely to miss school through illness. Children who consume a lot of food containing additives, and sugar in junk food, find it hard to concentrate on learning. Children who bring packed lunches should therefore bring wholesome nutritious sandwiches or other healthy filling foods. Crisps, chocolate, sweets and fizzy drinks are not permitted. Each child can bring in a cake to celebrate their birthday with their class but teachers ask that chocolate be avoided and low sugar healthy recipes are chosen. (Please check with your child's teacher about any food allergies there might be among pupils in your child's class).

Food sold for fundraising should also be from healthy recipes avoiding excess sugar.

Television and computer games

Watching television and playing computer games, especially during the most crucial years of development, are two occupations which we find incompatible with the holistic and humanly truthful quality of education we are striving to deliver. We ask the co-operation of parents to minimise the exposure of the children to the unhelpful influences of these media, especially during infancy and the Lower School years. This may seem a lot to ask in our present media-dominated culture. Here are some of the criteria we consider important for your consideration:

At the time of birth many of the vital organs are not yet fully formed. Their healthy development is gradually completed through physical nourishment and through the child's experience of its own movements and the feedback gained through sense impressions. These last are particularly important for neurological development, on

which the ability for intellectual learning later depends. Watching a TV screen inhibits all movements, but most disastrously it causes eye-focus to be fixed rigidly at the distance of the screen while the illusion of a three-dimensional picture is presented. On the objective level of sense impressions this is a lie, which can cause subconscious confusion to the nervous system while preventing the movement and feedback which would provide a natural correction. When such things are experienced frequently at a young age, inner habits are formed which can become stumbling blocks for conceptual learning.

Young children learn by imitation and take all sense impressions deeply into their being. Play and amusement are not just time-fillers. The first-hand experiences they bring are the joyful means of developing the child's faculties for doing, feeling and thinking. All sense impressions are food for the growth of both body and soul and children trustfully welcome whatever adults bring them. Many well-meaning adults do not realise the extent of their children's dependence in this respect. Once it is realised that up to age 8/9 children subconsciously imitate what they see, the effect of the caricatures and stereotypes which pervade so many "innocent" programmes becomes more obvious.

Around age 7 the shaping of the physical organs should have reached a certain stage of completion, which frees the forces that were engaged in forming them to serve the forming of ideas instead. In the years 7 to 14 the most important things to educate, besides the skills that will be needed, are a healthy imagination and a feeling for beauty. The ready-made images from film and TV screens blunt and distort the children's own imaginative faculties. At the same time, the physical inactivity while watching, coupled with the speed of the flickering images, tend to produce a reaction of hyperactivity in some children, whereas others become inwardly torpid. The one-sided situation of reacting to a non-responsive stimulus dulls the social faculties in all cases. Most of the above points also apply to computer games, with an additional dimension to be considered. The computer does respond in its own way but the type of linear thinking it demands has little to do with human interactions or with a child's

natural mode of experience. It is undeniable that computers are of great practical use for specialised tasks in adult life. However, for normally healthy children, who are still finding their place in a three-dimensional world and learning to relate to fellow human beings in a socially harmonious way, computer games constrict their developing faculties and alienate them from live reality.

Concern regarding these activities is not restricted to Steiner schools. A recent "Health in Lothian" report found that many who work with children are becoming increasingly concerned that TV, video and computer games are associated with an increase in significantly disturbed behaviour among some children. An experienced teacher can tell almost immediately by a child's behaviour whether he or she has been watching TV or playing computer games. We ask you, as parents, to act in support of our efforts to provide a truly human-centred education.

Participating in your child's class

New parents' evening

Early each autumn term a parents' evening is held, to which all new parents are invited. Short talks are given by teachers and there is usually a representative from the Trustees and the PTCA. It is a good way for new parents to ask questions and to make an acquaintance with the larger school community, and we would encourage you to attend.

General parents' evenings

Parents' evenings are held once a term, to enable the parents and teachers to discuss the class as a whole. The teacher will speak to the assembled group of parents about work being done with the children, and describe the curriculum. A broad sketch of the children's learning process at their current stage of development and a picture of the class dynamics is given. Parents can bring their insights and ask questions about changes their children may be undergoing. These meetings are important. To miss them is to miss a vital link in understanding the curriculum. They also give an opportunity for getting to know fellow parents of the class. For the child, the parents' participation is a sign of their involvement and support.

Parent/teacher communication

Regular and candid communication between parents and their child's teachers is an essential part of Steiner education. (See also 'Communication' in Section 1.)

Your child's class teacher or guardian relies upon you to tell them about any requirements for physical attention or medication that your child may need during the day.

Sometimes changes at home can affect your child's behaviour, such as a parent's absence, a serious illness in the family or any other upset. It is important that you let your class teacher or guardian know about such changes, so that your child's emotional needs can also be acknowledged at school.

Your class teacher's or guardian's telephone numbers are on the class list of your child's class which you will receive at the beginning of the session. Teacher's telephone numbers are also available through the School Office. Although teachers are grateful for important information you may need to give them at any time (within reason!), they may ask parents to call on a particular day of the week for longer discussions.

You are encouraged to meet with the teacher at least once a year for an objective assessment of your child's progress. Such meetings can be arranged at the initiative of either the teacher or yourself, and particularly for children in the Lower School, the teacher will appreciate visiting your home at least once. Home visits are mutually beneficial for all concerned, and help to foster the relationship between home and school.

Class convenors

Every year, and in every class, one or two parents volunteer to act as class convenors. The convenors form an important social link between the class teacher or guardian and all the families in the class. They are responsible for contacting and welcoming new parents, and assisting the class teacher with the organisation of class activities. These activities may include setting up a "Telephone Tree" or list of email addresses to distribute information, helping to organise class outings, organising transport, baking for parents' evenings and redecoration of the classroom or

inviting parents to join work groups for the Christmas Market.

A class convenors' term of office is normally one year, which means that every parent has the opportunity to become class convenor while their child is at the school. Your child's class teacher or guardian is the person to discuss this with.

The Parents', Teachers' and Carers' Association

The Parents' Teachers and Carers' Association (PTCA) is an important part of the school community, helping to nurture the healthy social life of the school and supporting the education - in its widest sense - of the children.

All parents are members of the PTCA with eight parents elected to the PTCA Council which meets once a month during term-time. A copy of the PTCA constitution is given to all new parents with supplementary notes on its operation.

The role of the PTCA is wide and varied and includes working with and supporting class convenors, developing initiatives within the school, assisting or supporting new parents and mediating between parents and school where the need arises. The PTCA maintains links with the Trustees and the Management Group.

The PTAC represents the parents' interests in the school and welcomes contact from parents about issues, points, concerns and ideas.

Parents' room

The parents have their own centrally located pleasant room for meetings, activities and informal get-togethers. There are facilities for making refreshments as well as a toy and drawing area for toddlers. All information of parental concerns is available here and the room may be booked for evening and weekend use by school-connected groups.

The Christmas Market

The annual Christmas Market is a vital fund-raising and social event in the school calendar. Each year the parents of Class 4 take on its overall organisation but the whole school community is involved in the production of goods for sale and their presentation on the day.

For one Saturday, usually just before Advent, the school is transformed. There are many beautiful and unusual things for sale – dolls of all sizes, pottery, woodwork, dried flowers, baked goods and preserves; there is raffle and much more. Hot lunches, coffee and cakes are served and in a stylish cafe in one of the classrooms. There are activities for the younger children, puppet shows and music. It is a busy day, which regularly raises more than £10,000. This money is spent on vital resources, which the school would not otherwise be able to afford.

The school parents are an ever-changing body, but skills for the making of traditional items for the Market are passed on and new ideas are incorporated as people come and go. New parents are always welcome in the groups making goods for the Market and it is a good way to meet other parents with children in different classes up and down the school.

Participating in the school as a whole

Each parent is an important part of a Steiner/Waldorf school community. The foremost contribution the parent makes is in supporting the education at home. There is also a very real need for each parent to participate in the overall life of the school, to whatever degree time and resources allow. There are many ways parents can help; here is a list of the most obvious ways:

- becoming a class convenor;
- attending PTCA meetings
- participating in fund raising activities
- attending whole school events such as class plays, concerts, eurythmy performances and assemblies

Festivals and events

When looking at the path of the festivals through the year, they can be seen in a variety of ways. They can be looked at as special markers, or signposts in time, or as turning points within seasonal patterns. They can also be viewed as a continuous thread that moves from outer to inner activity and back again or as a demonstration of the human connection with the cosmos, illuminating how we work, feel and think at different times of the year.

Many people, particularly children, enjoy the security of celebrating traditional festivals which have grown up, waxed, waned and changed in Britain over the past two millennia. However we view the festivals, they play an important part in the life of our school. This is a characteristic common to all Steiner Schools. Festivals mark special times of the year in which some aspect of the spiritual entering into human life is a cause for celebration – this is not only for each individual, but also for the community.

We celebrate seven main Christian festivals throughout the cycle of the year and others are included in various ways, amongst different age groups of pupils. The main festivals, which are created out of an anthroposophical view of the human being and of the world, are Christian in essence. It is our intention that on each occasion the festival is created anew and that it will be accessible to and strengthening for all members of the school whatever our cultural and religious backgrounds.

Whenever possible the Lower and Upper Schools are gathered together for these occasions, which usually include some form of artistic activity, such as music, drama, eurythmy or speech. There is often a story or a talk. There may also be activities which arise out of the festival and can take place in smaller groups. Other festivals are introduced and/or acknowledged in the classroom situation and can arise from the members of a particular class or from the context of a particular main lesson.

The Kindergarten celebrates its own festivals. (More information about these can be found in the Kindergarten Parents' Handbook).

Michaelmas

We begin the year with Michaelmas – the festival of the Archangel Michael. Michaelmas comes at a turning point in the year when the world of nature appears to be less active and is fading and apparently dying. We, however, need to draw on inner resources so that we do not “fade away” as does the natural world. The human qualities we need to draw on at this time are those of the will. We call on courage, on inner strength and on clarity of thought. Michaelmas is a good time for new

initiatives, not only in our immediate surroundings but in the wider world.

One way in which we mark this festival in our school is with an assembly where pupils of Class 2-4 perform a special Michaelmas play. This is followed later in the day with a special meal with the whole school (excluding the Kindergarten) prepared by various classes with and for one another.

As the weeks pass so the outer light dims and we bring to mind a picture of inner light and warmth to counteract the outer cold and darkness. The younger children (KG and classes 1-3) celebrate Martinmas on November 11, a Festival of Light, this includes a lantern walk around the school grounds.

Advent and Christmas

For the adult the weeks of advent can be a time of trials and struggles, as everything we try to do to foster a mood of quiet contemplation and tranquillity is hindered by the forces of commercialism and materialism.

For the children Advent is a season of expectation, of contemplation and of preparation for the birth of the Christ Child at Christmas. The beginning of Advent is marked by the Advent Spiral (or Advent Garden) for the younger children and celebrations are held every morning for the Lower and Upper Schools in the classroom with the lighting of candles and the singing of carols.

Pre-Christmas celebrations include the annual carol concert and the presentation of two medieval plays to the school by teachers and older pupils. The Nativity Play is for the whole school but the children do not see the Paradise Play until they have experienced the first Old Testament main lesson in Class 3. The plays are also presented to the wider school community and public in the evening.

Epiphany

Epiphany usually falls during the Christmas holidays, on the 6th January, but it is often given recognition by a third play (seen by Class 6 and up) — the Kings' Play — towards the end of January.

The first assembly of the new term is another opportunity for an Epiphany Festival.

Easter

Due to the Easter holiday we frequently do not have the opportunity to celebrate Easter in school. In our assemblies at the end of the spring term and at the beginning of the summer term we try to reflect the dramatic changes of mood within the Easter period by illustrating the polarities of life and death, of light and darkness, of contraction and expansion, of destruction and renewal.

Ascension and Whitsun

These two festivals lie close together and the quality of experience is more accessible to the older pupils. Ascension is a time when we can experience a reunion of the earth with the cosmos, a time when we can recognise signs of heavenly forces here on the earth and as the earth breathes out into summer, so our consciousness can begin to expand. It is a time when we can receive the revelation that the earth's living forces have been renewed for the benefit of the whole of humanity. On this day the school may go on an early morning walk and have a bring-and- share breakfast together on Craiglockhart Hill.

Whitsun is the celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit into the soul of humanity.

The challenge for us is on the one hand individual, — namely to try and understand the event of Easter and its meaning for us all, — and on the other communal, to understand one another despite differences of language and cultural background.

St John's Festival

At the height of midsummer we celebrate the festival of St. John. The sun is at its highest, the days are at their longest and it is the time when inner work is most difficult. We celebrate the outer light and the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ and the voice of conscience.

In recent years there have been different ways of marking this festival, either by going on a mid summer walk or by having a garden party which sometimes includes a celebration around a midsummer bonfire.

Teacher Training Course

The school runs a teacher training course for those wishing to teach in Steiner schools. This course runs at weekends (Friday evening and all day Saturday) during school term time. For further information on the course please contact Astrid Maclean or Mary Snow via the School Office or directly at erss.institute@steinerweb.org.uk

Further reading list

Steiner/Waldorf Education

Education towards Freedom by Frans Calgren (Floris Books)

Waldorf Education by Christopher Clouder & Martin Rawson (Floris Books)

The Way of a Child by A. C. Harwood (Rudolf Steiner Press)

Teaching as a Lively Art by Marjorie Spock (Rudolf Steiner Press)

The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy, a lecture by Rudolf Steiner (Rudolf Steiner Press)

Educating through Art by Agnes Nobel (Floris Books)

Undertanding Waldorf Education by Jack Petrash (Floris Books)

Lifeways by Gudrun Davy and Bons Voors (Hawthorn Press)

Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Education (Steiner Schools Fellowship)

Eurythmy, an Art of Movement for Our Time (available from the School Office)

Steiner Education by Gilbert Childs (Floris Books)

For parents of younger children

Parenting, a Path Through Childhood by Dotty Turner Coplen (Floris Books)

Children at Play by Heidi Britz-Crecelius (Floris Books)

Work and Play in Early Childhood by Freya Jaffke (Floris Books)

Children and their Temperaments by Marieke Anschütz (Floris Books)

A Guide to Child Health by Michaela Glöckler & Wolfgang Goebel (Floris Books)

Free to Learn by Lynne Oldfield (Hawthorn Press)

Ready to Learn by Martin Rawson (Hawthorn Press)

The Well Balanced Child by Sally Goddard Blynné (Hawthorne Press)

The Biodynamic Food & Cookbook by Wendy Cook (Clairview Books)

Toxic Childhood by Sue Palmer (Orion Publishers)

Festivals

Festivals, Family and Food by D Carey and J Large (Hawthorn Press)

All Year Round by Druitt, Fynes and Rowling (Hawthorn Press)

Festivals with Children by Brigitte Barz (Floris Books)

Festivals and their Meaning by Rudolf Steiner (Rudolf Steiner Press)

The Cycle of the Year as a Path of Initiation by Sergei Prokofieff (Temple Lodge Press)

The Rhythm of the Christian Year by Emil Bock (Floris Books)

The Christian Year by Evelyn Capel (Floris Books)

Celebrating Festivals with Children by Lenz (Anthroposophic Press)

Festivals Together by Fitzjon, Weston and Large (Hawthorn Press)

Living a Spiritual Year by Adrian Anderson (Rudolf Steiner Press)

Stories for the Festivals of the Year by Irene Johanson (Robinswood Press)

About Stories

The Power of Stories by Horst Kornberger (Floris Books)

The Wisdom of Fairy Tales by Rudolf Meyer (Floris Books)

These and other books can be bought from Helios Fountain, 7 Grassmarket, Edinburgh (229 7884) or

The Mulberry Bush, 77 Morningside Road, Edinburgh (447 5145)

