Hedgerow Children’s Garden
Parent Handbook

2019/2020

Contents

An activity of Rudolf Steiner School South Devon, registered charity number 286434
Company number 1693887 registered in England at the above address
www.southdevonsteinerschool.org
**Introduction**

In our Hedgerow Children’s Garden at the South Devon Steiner School we have 4 Kindergartens:

- **Spindlewood Kindergarten**
  Teacher: Sophia Tolfree
  Assistants: Anja Toodington and Christine Walton

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- **Hazelwood Kindergarten**  
  Teacher: Kirstie Swanborough  
  Assistant: Petra Brown

- **Apple Tree Kindergarten**  
  Teachers: Rowena Norris, Joanna McEwan (walk day only)  
  Assistants: Joanna McEwan and Laura Courtney (walk day only)

- **Willow Tree Kindergarten**  
  Teachers: Anne Weiss and Katherine Blaker (walk day only)  
  Assistants: Katherine Blaker and Laura Courtenay (walk day only)

The Kindergartens run from 8.20 am until 12.20 am.

We offer **afternoon care** sessions after Kindergarten on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. These finish at 2.50 pm.

Afternoon Care Sessions are led by Joanna McEwan, assisted by Maria Harding and Dawn Shade.

The **afternoon care application form can be found on the policies page of our website.**

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**Contact Details**

**Early Years Manager:** Anja Toddington

anja.toddington@steiner-south-devon.org
Kindergarten teachers:
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kirstie.swanborough@steiner-south-devon.org
rowena.norris@steiner-south-devon.org
anne.weiss@steiner-south-devon.org

Afternoon Care:
joanna.mcewan@steiner-south-devon.org

Admissions: Asaka Barsley
admissions@steiner-south-devon.org

Reception:
enquiries@steiner-south-devon.org

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Gaby Wood with Jeff van Zyl as Deputy
safeguarding@steiner-south-devon.org

Early Years SENDCo:
edusupport@steiner-south-devon.org

Admissions

We have 4 mixed age Kindergartens at our school, and each Kindergarten is able to take up to 16 children between the ages of 3 and 7 years old.

Once you have applied for a place in Kindergarten you will be invited to attend an admissions interview with your child, held by 2 of the Kindergarten teachers. This will be an opportunity for us to meet you and your child and find
out about your needs and for you to meet us and have any questions answered. Following the interview you will hear from admissions and hopefully offered a place within 2 weeks.

Usually just before your child is due to start Kindergarten the teacher will arrange a home visit, so your child can meet them in their own space and for the teacher to begin to get to know your child and to find out about their life rhythm in the home, and specific needs.

If your child starts Kindergarten in September, there will also be a Kindergarten work morning followed by a picnic, where all Kindergarten families can meet. This will be at the end of the Summer Holidays.

To find out more, please see our Admissions Policy on the school website:
https://www.southdevonsteinerschool.org/school-policies.html

Open Days, School Tours and Prospective Parent Afternoons

The school offers frequent school tours, termly Prospective Parent Afternoons and an annual Open Day. To find out more, please contact Asaka Barsley admissions@steiner-south-devon.org

Festivals and Term Dates

Early Childhood Festivals and Term Dates

Sept 2019 – July 2020

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Autumn Term 2019</th>
<th>Thurs 5th Sept – Tues 17th Dec</th>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Sept</td>
<td>Transition Picnic for class one children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Sept</td>
<td>Kindergarten starts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Sept, 10am to 12pm</td>
<td>Kindergarten Picnic/work day 10-12pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Sept</td>
<td>Kindergarten starts for new children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; October</td>
<td>Michaelmas (late morning)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Half Term</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mon 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Oct – Fri 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Nov</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; November</td>
<td>Martinmas lantern walk festival (late pm)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; December</td>
<td>Advent Spiral (late afternoon)</td>
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<td>Tues 17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; December</td>
<td>End of term Christmas Festival (late pm)</td>
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<td><strong>Spring Term 2020</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mon 6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Jan – Fri 27&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; March</strong></td>
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<td>Friday 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Feb</td>
<td>Candlemas (Children only)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Half Term</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mon 17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Feb – Fri 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Feb</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; March</td>
<td>Spring Festival (children only)</td>
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<td><strong>Summer Term 2019</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mon 20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; April – Thu 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July</strong></td>
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<td>Monday 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May</td>
<td>May Day Bank Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; May</td>
<td>May Festival (late morning)</td>
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<td>Monday 26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May</td>
<td>Spring Bank Holiday</td>
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<td><strong>Half Term</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tue 26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May – Fri 29&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; May</strong></td>
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<td>Friday 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; June</td>
<td>Whitsun Festival (children only)</td>
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<td>Thursday 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July</td>
<td>KG End of Year Celebration (late morning)</td>
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**Drop-off and pick-up times and arrangements**

Our Kindergarten morning starts at 8.20 am and finishes at 12.20 pm. Afternoon Care Sessions run from 12.20 pm until 2.50 pm.
We require children to arrive punctually in the mornings, so that activities and play can begin harmoniously. If a child arrives after 8.40am a ‘late’ mark will be put in the register. (Punctuality will be monitored for and regular lateness will be followed up as necessary)

**When you bring and collect your children it is essential that they are closely accompanied and supervised all the way to and from Kindergarten.**

**If your child is unable to attend Kindergarten:**

- Phone reception by 9am and tell them how many days your child will be absent for or phone every day during the period of absence. You must also give a reason for the absence.
- Requests for planned absences longer than 3 days must be made in writing on the form available from reception. Please note that holidays during term time will be registered as unauthorised absences.

**It is the responsibility of each parent to collect their child at the end of the Kindergarten morning at 12.20 pm or Afternoon care 2.50pm.**

- If someone other than you will be collecting your child, it is very important that you fill in the details on the sheet provided on the cloakroom noticeboard. If someone is going to regularly collect your child then please fill out the ‘Routine alternative collection arrangements’ form (available on our website on the policies page or from your child’s teacher). **Without this information, we cannot allow your child to leave with anyone other than you.**
- If pick-up arrangements change during the day, please phone reception to let them know who is picking up. This person must then collect a pick-up slip from reception to give to your child’s teacher.
- If you are delayed, please phone reception, who will inform your child's teacher.
- If a child has not been collected within 10 - 15 minutes of the end of Kindergarten or Afternoon Care, our Late Collection of Children Policy’ will be implemented.
Please note that once your child is of statutory school age (beginning of term after they turn 5) they are required by law to attend school every day unless flexi-schooling has been agreed.

Please see our attendance related policies and forms on our website:

- Attendance and Lateness Policy
- Late Collection of Children Policy
- Alternative Collection Arrangements
- Flexi-Schooling Policy

https://www.southdevonsteinerschool.org/school-policies.html

Settling in

We are keen that children and parents feel comfortable bringing and leaving their children at Kindergarten and do all we can to ensure this works well. Our teachers’ experience shows that children settle in best when the parent or carer
dropping the child off can calmly and confidently take the child to the setting holding hands. Children pick up on any lack of confidence or nerves on the part of the parent and this can impede the settling in process.

Timely and un rushed drop offs and pick-ups further facilitate this.

If a parent really wants or needs to wait close by out of sight of the children this will be possible.

We envisage it will be a smoother transition if the parent is able to leave. However, if this is not initially possible, and you wish to be with your child during outside play, we ask you to bring some handwork e.g. sewing, knitting, etc. you can be engaged in so the child doesn’t feel overly observed and has the opportunity to connect with the teacher and the other children. The process will be discussed and agreed with the teacher before the child joins and further as and when necessary until parent, child and staff are happy that the child is settled.

**Clothing**

Choose clothing which is comfortable, durable and weather appropriate! Plain or patterned clothing is great. Logos, adverts and pictures are distracting and are not permitted.
• A **warm coat** must be worn between November and Easter. Warm woollen socks are also essential for the winter months, as are mittens.
• A **waterproof jacket and over-trousers** are essential for outdoor play, even in the summer months.
• A **hat** must be worn every day, woollen or sun-hat according to the season
• In the summer months, **long sleeve cover up shirts** are needed. We do not apply sun-cream to the children.
• A **spare set of clothes** needs to be kept on the child’s peg in the lobby with spare socks and underwear, bottoms and tops and an extra warm layer, e.g. cardigan or jumper.

**Foot Wear**

**Indoor shoes or slippers** are needed by all children. These must be plain (no faces, ears or cartoon characters please) well-fitting, so they stay on as the child goes about their Kindergarten day.

Kindergarten pupils must wear shoes at all times whilst on the school site.

Footwear should be practical, well-fitting and offer appropriate protection from weather and terrain; **boots for winter, light weight shoes and closed toe sandals for summer** (Easter to October half term only). Due to the nature of our grounds and the use of spades when gardening, sandals must have closed toes and good heel support. Crocs are not appropriate footwear for Kindergarten.

If your child wears wellington boots in Kindergarten, please make sure they have **thick warm socks during the winter months.**

**A note on wellington boots:**

It is our strong recommendation that children don’t wear wellington boots by default in Kindergarten, but only in wet, muddy weather and when gardening. Wellingtons are no good for running, balancing, climbing…they are inhibiting...
the development of the senses of motion and balancing - and they prevent the skin from breathing, which is affecting the senses of touch and as a result sense of well-being. They don’t give the feet enough freedom to move and they are stiff, cold, and made out of plastic!

It is a good idea if your child has a pair of wellingtons that stay in Kindergarten, just like the slippers, so they can be put on when it’s raining or muddy.

Otherwise a pair of sturdy walking boots in the winter or light well-fitting shoes in the summer are recommended.

For further information please see our ECD Clothing Policy on our website:
https://www.southdevonsteinerschool.org/school-policies.html

Snacks and Lunches

Please send with your child about 2 pieces of fruit a week and a vegetable on soup day. This helps the children to enjoy giving and receiving.
Should your child have any special dietary requirements, please discuss this with your child’s teacher. We might ask you to bring in any special ingredients (e.g. gluten free oats, gluten free bread) needed by your child.

Water and herbal or fruit tea is provided throughout the session.

**I your child attends afternoon care, please bring a healthy and wholesome lunch for them.** Sandwiches, homemade quiches, pizzas or pasties, soups (in thermos flask), salads, smoothies and fruit are all good examples. Please avoid highly processed and packaged food and bear in mind that meals need to be vegetarian (as we don’t have food hygiene facilities for meat and fish) and that chocolate, sweets and crisps are not permitted as school lunches.

Water and tea is provided in afternoon care sessions.

**Allergen Information for foods used in the Early Childhood Department**

As part of our daily routine in the early childhood department, we prepare food together which we eat later in the morning for our snack. Under the Food Information Regulations (2014) we have a duty to make parents aware of any possible allergens that may be present in the foods that we prepare and eat together. These may include:

- Celery and Celeriac – this includes celery stalks, leaves and seeds
- Cereals containing gluten – spelt, rye, barley and oats
- Eggs – occasionally used in cakes for birthdays or festivals
- Dairy products – butter and occasionally cream
- Nuts and seeds – we do not tend to use nuts, but we do eat sunflower and pumpkin seeds. We occasionally use almonds for festive baking
- Soya – tamari

The other 8 major allergen groups that some people may be sensitive to are: Crustaceans, fish, lupin, molluscs, mustard, peanuts, sesame seeds and sulphur dioxide. We don’t use any of these in our foods.

**If your child is allergic to any of the above foods it is important that you let your teacher know at the beginning of the school year/as soon as possible.**

Whenever food is brought in to share at occasions such as festivals, we ask that you always label the food you bring clearly with ingredients and possible allergens.

**Educational Framework**

In the Steiner Early Years approach, we provide time and space for the natural,
unforced development of key life skills by creating a warm and secure learning environment where the qualities of childhood are nurtured. This will help to build a strong base for social and emotional competence, literacy and numeracy and more formal learning in the Lower School.

**Rhythm and Repetition**

Steiner education recognises rhythm as an educational principle of key importance, and a strong framework of rhythm, routine and repetition is employed, particularly in the early years. Rhythms provide reassurance and security for children and helps them to understand the past, present and future: it is a healthy way to start to find their place in the world. Repetition plays a key role in establishing continuity, and it assists in the development of memory.

**Play & Imitation**

Free creative play strengthens the imagination, and repeated research studies have shown that children who are encouraged to enjoy creative play tend to show more empathy towards others and to display less aggression. They are more likely to have the capacity to see things from the perspective of the other, and demonstrate fewer signs of anxiety, distress or fatigue. In Steiner early childhood education, children are allowed to learn through investigation, exploration and discovery, encouraging them to become inventive and adaptable.

It is the task of the early childhood teacher is to provide the presence of a “working adult” – someone whom the children can freely imitate. A role model worthy of imitation.

A combination of practical and artistic activities is undertaken in the company of the children, designed to encourage skills such as concentration, perseverance and independent activity. Children are fascinated by adult activity, and it is certainly a great responsibility to be worthy of a young child’s imitation.
Story-telling

The environment created in Steiner early childhood education promotes the development of competent talking and listening, enhancing the child’s ability to use words with confidence. Children are encouraged to speak freely, and learn to listen to others. There is an overriding emphasis on the oral tradition, and many wonderful stories are related. A well-told story creates an appreciation for the human voice and the beauty and rhythms of language. This assists in the development of a strong and rich imagination, and helps to extend the vocabulary and develop a good memory.

Festivals and Celebrations

Festivals are celebrated with the children so as to nourish body, soul and spirit. Although the Steiner curriculum is non-denominational, many Christian festivals are observed, and the children love the activities and preparations involved, such as finding seasonal materials, baking, making lanterns or other simple craft work activities. Festivals from other cultures are also marked and celebrated in many Steiner schools. In the Early Years there is a general emphasis on celebrating seasonal festivals with a view of what is happening in nature, rather than the Christian content.

Most festivals will be celebrated at the end of a Kindergarten morning and parents will be invited to some of these in order to create a sense of community for the children. We also ask for help from parents with the preparation of some of the main festivals. Sometimes festivals are celebrated outside of Kindergarten hours.

Birthdays are also celebrated in Kindergarten. A birthday story is told, where the children hear about each other’s biography.

The Daily Rhythm

Outdoor play and activity

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As the children arrive they find the teacher and the assistant diligently working and preparing the daily activities and food preparations for snack. The older children help with daily work for a short period of time, before going off to play. The younger children are welcome to join in the activity or initiate their play, which is child initiated, with minimal adult involvement.

The first part of the outdoor time is spent in the enclosed garden where the children enjoy playing with the mud kitchen, digging, using the sand pit, gardening and planting, sweeping and caring for the outdoor space, play their own games...and participate in meaningful purposeful work... watering the plants, cleaning the windows, washing the cloths, sorting our herbs... woodwork projects and fire making.

For the later part of outdoor play we sometimes go to the shared garden, where the children have the opportunity to play with children from other Kindergartens, climb trees, balance, play in the big sand garden, help mow the grass etc.

Each Kindergarten has an Expedition day, where we are outside all morning, go on a longer walk, and have a picnic followed by free play and exploration, then return in time for the Kindergarten morning. This happens once a week on a set day.

**Lobby time**

At the end of outside play time we tidy up the garden and go inside to get ready in the lobby. This is an opportunity for children to practise taking off their own boots and waterproofs, helping little ones as they get older, and learn to take care of their personal hygiene, e.g. toileting and hand washing.

**Ring time**

Once we are ready, and the table has been laid, we join together for our ring time, which is led by the teacher. This includes seasonal verses, songs, finger games, nursery rhymes and simple circle games accompanied by appropriate gestures. Sometimes we include songs or verses in different languages.

Children engage through imitation and they soon know the songs and verses well, learning through rhythm and repetition.

**Snack time**
After ring time we gather at the table for our shared light snack. Examples of Kindergarten snacks are rice with toasted sunflower seeds, vegetable soup, jam sandwiches, millet with apple sauce, apple crumble, oat porridge, flapjacks, barley buns. The snacks vary slightly in the different Kindergartens, but the grains used are the same on different days.

Children participate with setting and serving the food, as well as with clearing the meal, and helping to wash up. Snack time is also a great opportunity for conversations about all kinds of topics and for sharing experiences from home life.

The snack does not replace lunch, but a lighter lunch might be needed after Kindergarten.

**Indoor play**

During this time child uses his/her own creative imagination to – for example - make a building site out of wooden planks, a shop, a train, a spaceship or a den with wooden clothes racks and pieces of muslin.

The older children have ongoing handwork projects during the spring and summer term, such as weaving and sewing, which they will continue throughout the term or for however long is necessary to complete them. During festival times a particular craft or baking activity may be pursued on different days.

Other purposeful activities carried out during this time may include: painting, baking, cleaning, polishing, carding, or weaving, spinning, etc.

**Tidy time**

At the end of free play, we sing our 'Tidy time song' and children co-operate to help to sort, fold, put away the resources in preparation for out story time.

**Story time**

Before going home or to afternoon care, we come together for Story time. The teacher tells a traditional fairy tale or a seasonal nature story. This is told by heart for a period of two weeks, thus enabling the children to create *their own* pictures out of their imaginations. This helps to nourish the development of a
strong and rich imagination, increases the vocabulary and develops the children's memory. Each story has a gift to be received, creating an environment of reverence. Sometimes the teacher may perform a puppet play, which the oldest children in the class help with from the second week by moving the puppets.

Stories are also an important part of the festival or a birthday, and help us to celebrate our special occasions.

Home time

After story time we put away our chairs and get ready to go home. We sing a good-bye song before we go outside to wait to be picked up.

Afternoon Care

Some children stay for afternoon care. They are picked up by the afternoon care teacher or assistant and have a period of outside play, before gathering around the table (or have a picnic in summer) to have their lunch. After lunch there is a short rest time, followed by the opportunity for the children to either have a quiet time with a craft activity or a book inside or have a more active time outside, according to their individual needs.

The day ends with a story, then it’s time to go home.

Children can only be collected after afternoon care by yourself or anyone written on the ‘Routine Alternative collection arrangements’ form. If your child is being collected by someone unusual, please inform the afternoon care teacher.
The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

As part of the EYFS framework, we are required to observe the children's learning and development, and to follow it closely, so that any needs can be meet through appropriate actions from their Key worker. Please be aware that your child's Key worker is normally their Kindergarten teacher. Occasionally there can be an arrangement where an experienced assistant takes on this role for a small group of children. If this is the case for your child, we will let you know.

Your child’s progress will be discussed in extensive individual parent conversations, which happen at least once a year and then as needed.

The different areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage are:

**Prime Areas**

- Personal, emotional and social development.
- Communication and Language
- Physical development.

**Secondary Areas**

- Literacy.
- Maths.
- Understanding of the world
- Expressive Arts and Design.
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 the EYFS on the SWSF Website http://www.steinerwaldorf.org. 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. 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 displayed in the Kindergarten).

For more information please visit our website:
https://www.southdevonsteinerschool.org/early-years-foundation-stage-information-for-parents.html
**Differentiation for 5 – 7 year-olds**

As the oldest children in Kindergarten (5 by August of that school year or older) are not included in the EYFS, we are required to provide a differentiated curriculum for these children.

These are embedded in the normal Kindergarten rhythms as follows:

**Daily rhythm**

✧ Expectation to help with daily work first thing in the morning, chopping vegetables, polishing wooden bowls, gardening, cleaning ...
✧ Using sharp knives for chopping and learning to use real tools safely for woodwork
✧ Helping little ones get ready in the lobby, help with their clothing shoe laces etc.
✧ Learning to solve conflicts independently
✧ Learning to be a good example for the little ones to imitate, especially at ringtime or story and at the snack table - expectation to help the teacher show the little ones the right thing to do
✧ Setting the table (counting and arranging)
✧ Serving food at the snack table (careful carrying, pouring from a jug)
✧ Helping to clear up after snack time (washing up, clearing and wiping the tables, sweeping the floor)
✧ Performing puppet shows for younger children at play time (begin to make up own stories or re-enact known stories) - puppets and props are freely available
✧ Re-enacting stories or experiences in their role play (dressing up clothes are available)

**Weekly rhythm**

✧ Coming on expedition day/walk day (walk a longer distance, run, carry a rucksack, build up physical strength, gross motor skills, determination and will forces)
✧ Taking part in painting once a week (learning to hold a paint brush correctly and paint in a clean technique)
✧ Taking part in handwork activities (sewing, weaving, felting, crafts, finger-knitting) to develop fine motor skills

**Yearly rhythm**

✧ Performing puppet shows for the group at story time at various times during the year
✧ Helping with festival preparations, setting up festival table etc.
✧ Doll project (making a sewing case, blanket and doll, sometimes also bedding and clothing for doll) starting after the February half-term through to the end of the school year, ending in a naming ceremony for the ‘babies’
✧ Skipping in a rope in the summer term
✧ House, tree, person drawings in the summer term
✧ In the summer term get together once a week with pre-Class-one children from all the Kindergartens for an advanced ring time, picnic and play (getting to know their peers from other Kindergartens)
What is Waldorf Early Childhood Education?

Essential Characteristics of Steiner/Waldorf Education for the Child from Birth to Seven

The future development of each individual child and of humanity as a whole depends on health-giving experiences in the first seven years of life. An atmosphere of loving warmth and guidance that promotes joy, wonder, and reverence supports such healthy development. The most essential aspect of the work with the little child is the inner attitude of the educator, who provides the example for the child’s imitation. Therefore the work of the Waldorf educator demands an ongoing process of research and self-education including anthroposophical study, meditative practice, artistic and practical activity.

In Waldorf nursery-kindergartens, home care programs, childcare centres, parent-child programs and other settings, foundations are laid for later learning and healthy development, including life-long physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth.

This education, based on an understanding of the development of human individuality, offers protection and respect for the dignity of childhood. It includes an understanding of the unfolding development of the child from pre-birth to seven, including the unique significance of the development of walking, speaking and thinking in the first three years of life.

Activities in Waldorf early childhood education take into consideration the age-specific developmental needs of young children, from a focus on will-oriented physical activity in the first three years, then on imaginative play in the middle years of early childhood, and later a more cognitive approach to learning after the child enters school.

Educational Principles

Waldorf based programs may differ according to geography, culture, group size, age-range, and individual teaching approach. Granting these differences, Waldorf programs share certain fundamental characteristics:
- Loving interest in and acceptance of each child
- Opportunities for self-initiated play with simple play materials as the essential activity for young children.
- This is the young child’s work and makes it possible for them to digest and understand their experiences.
- Awareness that young children learn through imitation, through the experience of diverse sensory impressions, and through movement. Their natural inclination is to actively explore their physical and social environment. The surroundings offer limits, structure and protection, as well as the possibility to take risks and meet challenges.
- A focus on real rather than virtual experiences to support the child in forming a healthy relationship to the world.
- Artistic activities such as storytelling, music, drawing and painting, rhythmic games, and modelling that foster the healthy development of imagination and creativity.
- Meaningful practical work such as cooking, baking, gardening, handwork and domestic activity that provide opportunities to develop unfolding human capacities. Here the emphasis is on the processes of life rather than on learning outcomes.
- Predictable rhythms through the day, week and year that provide security and a sense of the interrelationships and wholeness of life. Seasonal and other festivals are celebrated according to the cultural and geographical surroundings.

We recognize that healthy child development unfolds most fully in the context of a community with healthy social relationships among parents, teachers and children. Waldorf educators strive to create such conscious, collaborative communities around the children in their care and see their activity as part of a worldwide cultural impulse.

The IASWECE Council members (early childhood educators and trainers from 32 countries) prepared this statement describing what we consider to be the essential characteristics of a Waldorf kindergarten. We hope that this document will be a helpful reference for those who are working to develop Waldorf early childhood programs around the world.
Policy Summaries

Safeguarding

At South Devon Steiner School we take Safeguarding very seriously.

Safeguarding is our highest priority. No child should suffer harm of any form, either at home or at school.

Everyone who works or visits our school has the responsibility to make sure that all our children are safe.

If you are worried about the safety of any young person in our school, you must report this to one of the Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSPs) in school who will act in the best interests of the child. The office will assist you with finding and liaising with one of the DSPs immediately.

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is available on our policies page on the school website, as are other safeguarding related policies. You can also find more information about safeguarding on our safeguarding page.

Screen-based media (televisions, computers, laptops, mobile phones etc.)

Including online-safety

Ideally, children in the Early Years (0-7) should not be exposed to any screen entertainment at all. We recognise that this sets high and in some cases unrealistic expectations. However, as a lot of families at the school share this ideal, we strongly recommend that there should be no screen use on play dates.

Please take note of our e-Safety advice for Kindergarten parents, which you can find on the policies page on our website:

Photography and Mobile Phones

Our school is a mobile phone free zone. Please keep your mobile phones switched off and out of sight on the school grounds.

Photographs may not be taken at all, unless after Kindergarten hours with permission from a Kindergarten teacher. No photographs showing any children may be taken.

For further information please see our ECD Photography and Use of Mobile Phone Policy on the SDSS website.

Intimate Care

Young children sometimes still need a little help on the toilet or might occasionally wet or soil themselves. In order to meet each child’s individual needs in this area, we ask parents to let us know if their child needs help with anything. We work together with parents to devise an Intimate Care Plan to meet any toileting needs.

Should your child need help to get cleaned up and changed after a toileting ‘accident’, we will inform you on the same day.

For further details see our intimate care policy on the SDSS website.

Behaviour

Our Setting recognises the importance of positive and effective behaviour management strategies in promoting children’s welfare, learning and enjoyment.

The aims of our behaviour policy are to help children to

• Develop a sense of caring and respect for one another.
• Build caring and co-operative relationships with other children and adults.
• Develop a range of social skills and help them learn what constitutes acceptable behaviour.
Develop confidence, self-discipline and self-esteem in an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement.

Staff use positive methods of guidance, with anticipation and pre-emption of potential problems, and/or avoidance of difficulties through early intervention, redirecting the children in a non-confrontational way as considered appropriate. The aim of the Kindergarten staff is to have a close knowledge of each child.

All children learn and grow in their understanding of socially appropriate and desirable behaviour. In the Kindergarten the teachers work with social behaviour by endeavouring to be role models worthy of imitation. The variety and sequencing of the daily activities build a firm rhythm that provides a comfortable knowing of what to expect by the child, which further contributes to the intention to support positive behaviour.

Parents are encouraged to discuss and inform any difficulties a child may be facing at home, or any factors, which may affect that child’s normal behaviour. Allowance will be made for such things as children’s ages & stages of development, family circumstances etc.

Where problems arise that do not respond to our approaches, the Kindergarten teacher will arrange to discuss these discreetly with the parents, so that they can work together in deciding upon and reinforcing, the most appropriate direction for the child.

For further details see our Early Years policy on encouraging positive behaviour on the SDSS website.
Health and Safety

The SDSS Early Years Department will ensure that all areas of its undertaking are subjected to a suitable risk assessment to identify potential hazards and to introduce control measures to eliminate or reduce harm.

It is our policy to make provisions for first aid in accordance with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981. All accidents and incidents or ‘near misses’ with the potential for injury (whether that injury actually occurred or not) are reported and recorded in the incident/ accident book and parents informed.

We have established a fire safety programme with the objective of guarding against the outbreak of fire and to ensure, in so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of persons on the premises in the event of the outbreak of fire or other emergencies. As part of this we perform a half-termly fire evacuation practice.

Please note that you need to notify your teacher as soon as possible if your child has an infectious disease. There are exclusion periods for some infectious diseases and a list of these is displayed on the lobby notice board of your child’s Kindergarten.

If your child has diarrhoea or vomiting they may return to school at least 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

You can find our Health and Safety Policy, Fire Safety Policy, Infection Control Policy and other Health and Safety related Policy on our School Website under Policies/Health and Safety

Concerns and Complaints

Our Concerns & Complaints Designated Person is Jeff van Zyl. He can be contacted by email to ccdp@steiner-south-devon.org

For the school’s Concerns and Complaints Policy and a summary flow chart see the policy page on our Website.
Complaints relating to the EYFS

Our Concerns and Complaints Policy and the procedure herein, is relevant to the school’s fulfilment of the standards set out by Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework.

Complainants entering a complaint in relation to this provision, will be notified of the outcome within 28 days of the School receiving the complaint.

Parents / Carers can contact OFSTED in relation to the EYFS as follows:
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Website: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

Please see the School Website for other Early Years Policies and Guidance
Recommended Reading

Below is a selection of books that discuss all aspects of our Early Years Education.

- **Understanding the Steiner Waldorf Approach** (Early years education in practice series) Authors: Janni Nicol and Jill Taplin. Publisher: Routledge. www.routledge.com
- **Under the Stars – The Foundations of Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education** Author: Renate Long Breipohl. Publisher: Hawthorn Press.
- **Creative Discipline, Connected family** (Transforming Tears, Tantrums and Troubles While Staying Close to Your Children) Author: Lou Harvey-Zahra, Floris Books, 2015
- **Happy Child, Happy Home** (Conscious Parenting and Creative Discipline) Author: Lou Harvey-Zahra, Floris Books, 2014
- **You are Your Child’s First Teacher** Author: Rahima Baldwin Dancy. Publisher: Hawthorn Press.
- **Bringing the Steiner Waldorf Approach to your Early Years Practice** (Comparative Approaches to Early Childhood Education – a Series). Author(s): Janni Nicol. Publisher: David Fulton.
- **Well I Wonder – Childhood in the Modern World** Author: Sally Schweizer. Publisher: Sophia Books.
• KINDLING – Journal for Steiner Early Childhood Education and Care
  Email: earlyyearsnews@aol.com.

• Meeting the Child in Steiner Kindergartens: An exploration of beliefs
  values and practices
  Edited by Rod Parker-Rees. Routledge 2011

• Waldorf Education
  Authors: Christopher Clouder and Martyn Rawson. Floris Books.

• Festivals, Family and Food
  Authors: D Carey & J Large. Publisher: Hawthorn.

• All Year Round
  Authors: A Druitt, C Fynes-Clinton, & M Rowling. Publisher: Hawthorn
  Press.

• Toymaking with Children
  Author: F Jaffke. Publisher: Floris.

• The Parent and Child Group Handbook
  Author: D Male. Publisher: Hawthorn Press.

• Storytelling with Children
  Author: N Mellon. Publisher: Hawthorn Press.

• Creative Play with your Baby
  Authors: Christopher Clouder & Janni Nicol. Publisher: Gaia Books.

• Creative Play with your Toddler
  Authors: Christopher Clouder & Janni Nicol. Publisher: Gaia Books.