Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020
From Pioneering Personalities to Consciously Joined-Up Organisation
What’s the point?

We set out on this process to articulate a common strategic plan with the clear wish neither to simply dutifully create a generic, template-based document that would go on to gather dust in some drawer nor to subject ourselves to a lofty collection of ideals that would only depress us through our inability to uphold or live up to them. We wished for our strategic plan to enable us to stand together united under one realistic picture and with a sense of attainable purpose that would enable us to work with joy to the same end and vision.

How we achieved it

At the request of the Council of trustees, the School Management Team together with College and Council held a series of staff and community workshops and consultations between January and March 2016 to enable the widest possible input whilst maintaining a focus on the finished document. We quite consciously expressed our gratitude for the beginnings and history of our school and put forward our wishes for its future.

Towards 2020

“Life in South Devon in 2016 is significantly different from when the school was first founded some 35 years ago. Our community mirrors many of the challenges faced by human beings around the world. We are working our way out of a financial crisis which had its peak in the summer of 2015. We grapple with increasing layers of rules and regulations and the challenge of how to manage an organisation independently and as free from political and corporate influence as possible. We also grapple with our idealism which often can get in the way of running an effective school. At the same time, we remain privately funded and aspire to make our education available to as wide a community as possible.

As the school emerged from its financial crisis in the summer of 2015 a new strategic focus began to emerge. It is a time of consolidation whilst we continue to pursue our expansion towards Upper School. This can only be achieved if other areas
experience a narrowing to core elements and we experiment with afternoon clubs to offer additional activities.

We are committed to the transformation of our school towards a consciously joined-up, professionally managed organisation which is able to protect and nourish the space for our idealism. This way we see ourselves being able to integrate the pressures and beauties from without and within and continue to offer the wonderful education that is Steiner Waldorf education in South Devon.

I hope our excitement and enthusiasm that emerges from our strategic plan resonates with you!”

P. Mark Drewell
Chairman of the Board of Trustees
May 2016

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our work is guided by the vision of the whole human being in every individual who we welcome into our midst by taking children on a journey through the stages of their development and into a purposeful adult life. To this end we strive to provide beautiful, cohesive school grounds and facilities which radiate learning, working and playing while attracting and expanding full and diverse enrolment supported by abundant resources. We enthusiastically work and serve in the world community as stewards of social renewal.

Our mission is to prepare our children for a purposeful journey into adult life which will allow them to bring relevant contributions to the world. We do this on the basis of Rudolf Steiner’s humanitarian Waldorf curriculum through which we awaken and inspire our pupils’ and students’ critical thinking, emotional intelligence and artistic expression.

Our Values Underpin Everything We Do.

The South Devon Steiner School’s educational model is based on Rudolf Steiner’s philosophy of developing the whole human being and is informed by anthroposophy (a philosophy of human wisdom).

It is important to us to preserve the innocence and wonder of childhood, to practice and encourage wholesome living, and to provide emotional and environmental safety.
Creativity and artistic expression are essential in a child’s healthy growth and development, and are fully integrated into the curriculum. We seek and embrace inclusivity in our community.

We believe that the education of children, teachers and parents is a lifelong process. Our values fall into three spheres.

**Truth, Beauty and Goodness…**

...encompass a collection of values that foster a healthy emotional and intellectual life:

- Liberal arts education
- Analytical, creative and flexible thinking
- Vigorous academics
- Comprehensive artistic training
- Kindness & compassion
- Gratitude & reverence
- Humour & play

**Social Renewal…**

...manifests itself through our actions. Waldorf education exerts a healing force in the world through:

- Sustainability of Humankind
- Service to others
- Care of self
- Stewardship of Earth
- Work in partnership with parents & greater urban community
- Inclusiveness
- Personal responsibility, integrity & courage

**Organizational Integrity…**

...requires us to be thoughtful in the way we organize and run our school:

- Transparent processes
- Decision-making through consensus
- Governing bodies & individuals working in partnership
- Professionalism & collegiality
We have emphasised four aspects of our values in our discussions leading up to the current strategic plan. They values relate to each other in a special way which is that our **sense of community** and our practice of **inner work** support the **living Waldorf curriculum** at the centre of our school which in turn supports the children’s **purposeful journey into life**.

**Inner Work**
It requires space and time to do inner reflective work as individuals and in study groups. But inner work extends beyond this: it involves getting enough sleep, seeking to express an authentic sense of self and not simply relying on “Rudolf Steiner said…” in pursuit of the question of what is authentic and real here and now in this place at this point in time. It is the main tool for teachers and perhaps it should be essential for the quality all of our personal lives, the life of our school and community that we create, maintain and hold dear this space and time.

**Community of People, Animals and Land**
Our geographical place, the people, the animals on our campus and the land around us, how we relate to each other and how we relate to the wider world makes this place and our school unique. The way we run the school is sensitive to and respects our genius loci.

**The Living Waldorf Curriculum**
Steiner education (or Waldorf education as it is known in most countries outside of the UK) is based on an understanding of child development that has its roots in a philosophy known as ‘anthroposophy’. The educational content of anthroposophy informs the work of the teachers; it is not a belief system and is not taught in Steiner schools.

**Purposeful Journey into Life**
Steiner education has a proven track record for providing a sound and practical basis for working with children, enabling them to find their creativity and to become free individuals who can think for themselves, make their own judgements and find their own purpose and direction in life. We also aspire to role modelling in the way we create and maintain an active and productive community life around the school with all its frustrations and joys.

**Towards a Consciously Joined-Up Organisation**

Our vision, mission and values describe our ambition to role model and bring forth self-confident, thriving change agents who challenge the status quo in a productive and human way.

The Waldorf curriculum and its understanding of child (and human) development offers an approach as to how to go about this: the curriculum takes the child through the stages of child development as it journeys through the stages of human development.

Taking this idea, we are able to say that the challenge of managing our school in 21st century England perhaps is also a question of human development. While we may disagree with much within the status quo we operate in, it is nonetheless our current stage of human consciousness and disagreement in itself does not remove the fact that, ultimately, we have to comply with the law, rules and regulations or we will be made to or closed down. In any case, non-compliance, conscious or not, costs a lot of energy, is not necessarily a pleasant way to work as it causes stress.

Compliance of course brings with it dangers such as “going to sleep” and not questioning and driving oneself mad with ever more things to do if we are not clear what it means to be “good enough”.
What we have identified as the keys to our forward journey are:

1) A deep **consciousness of inner factors** (our ideals and approach) and an articulation fit for 21st century England
2) An equal **consciousness of the external factors** that affect us from financial via demographic to legal frameworks, rules and regulations
3) The capacity for and exercising of **joined-up thinking**
4) The ability to maintain a **nimble and adaptable organisation** with **reliable processes** and an appetite for **informed decision making**

These are in our view the ingredients with which we can ground our idealism in 21st century England through earning respect, appreciation and understanding for what we are trying to achieve. We believe that this also brings about a much needed shift in the inner mood of our community from “entrenched resistance” to “creative and productive engagement”.

**What We Are Going to Do**

The strategic planning work resulted in three focus areas within which we identified many strategic objectives and goals.

The focus areas are:

- Management and Organisation
- Education
- Community and Business Development

**Focus Area: Management and Organisation**

**Commitment**: We will rapidly and radically become a more effective school and improve our capacity to secure and manage resources, uphold processes and make decisions.

**Guiding question**: How can we secure and allocate the necessary (financial) resources to provide an exemplary education with suitable facilities and organisational forms that support and enhance the curriculum?

**Objective**: Radically rethink our approach to administration

- Review the capacity and capabilities of the administration
- Implement appropriate management systems (SIMS, HR/Personnel, Health & Safety, record keeping)
  - Improve communication on all levels
  - Develop accessible school calendars for festivals, term dates and facilities bookings
- Outsource and collaborate health & safety and personnel
- Develop a nimble, proactive administration that supports the education and has the capacity to implement the strategic plan
- Manage the school towards and excellent delivery of the Waldorf curriculum, “outstanding” school inspections, financial sustainability and rewarding community experience

**Objective: Improving processes and decision making across the whole school**
- Continue organisational development following successful implementation of College (holds the purpose, heart and soul of the school, consulting body for SMT) and SMT (responsibility to ensure that all aspects of the school are happening) as well as School Administrator role into management of departments EY, LS and US through clearly mandated and accountable department chairs with responsibility for department and authority to make decisions
- Continue to create a more join-up organisational roles and responsibilities through ongoing governance and management best practice reviews, training and research

**Objective: Enable better pay and improve employment benefits for all paid employees**
- Staff with children not to be disadvantaged by our low salaries and cost of the education
- Create a simple means-tested Staff School Fees policy to be part of the employment package following independent school best practice (as per other Steiner schools)
- Improve teacher salaries over the next three to five years towards a full-time salary of £25,000
- Action overdue admin staff pay review

**Objective: Ensure the financial sustainability of the school**
- Implement financial best practices
  - Continue programme of improving financial policies and procedures
- Research into relevant funding streams
  - Develop bursary endowment fund
  - Develop fundraising programmes to attract funding for new infrastructure
- Develop and implement annual marketing plan that focuses on recruitment and retention
  - Grow school to 340 pupils by summer 2019
- Develop a simplified and more effective budget that gives a better financial overview and improved control
- Develop a financial aid programme to make the education more accessible to all families
  - Develop Bursary Fund that will reduce the variance from 26% to 20%, i.e. 6% of budget
- Review financial contributions
  - Develop new agreements while maintaining sensitivity to existing arrangements
- Support the development of new and existing community based enterprises → See Focus Area: Community and Business Development

**Objective: Release latent capacity within the organisation**
- Move towards fewer and more full-time staff
- Developing a clear annual cycle across all levels from governance to class room level including parents meetings, parents evenings, class trips, festivals
- Allowing term time activity to focus more on teaching (for teachers)
- Reduce holidays from 15-17 weeks to 10-12 weeks holiday: less stressful term time
• Move (where possible) planning, curriculum development, professional development, organisational development, annual/termly tasks such as policy reviews and administrative tasks into this additional time

**Objective:** Develop our teaching and admin spaces, grounds and gardens in line with our financial ability and strategic requirements

• Complete the Gateway Project
  o Get the RHI payments right
  o Complete and rename the building formerly known as the Bunkhouse
    ▪ Focus on classrooms on 1st floor
    ▪ Bring about parents room/shop/café to take community enterprise capacity to the next level
    ▪ Complete catering and educational kitchen to produce food for café, fundraising activities and school meals
  o Move the maintenance shed to the new dedicated building off the turning circle
  o Move the shop into Bunkhouse
• Refurbish/ replace marquee
• Refurbish/ upgrade polytunnel in Outdoor Classroom
• Meet school regulations and DfE requirements ref shower and changing facilities by implementing dedicated facilities at the back of the Turnip Field
• Rethink our site development master plan and cost infrastructure development to attract funding
• Build new eurythmy hall space
• Free up Greenwood Hall for drama
• Amphitheatre with tiered seating and sail structure in place of old marquee for community activities, sports/games, outdoor drama
• Develop Arts & Crafts Village
• Develop dedicated Parent and Child Space
• Build new class rooms for class 1 and 2
• Develop Administration Block and Staff Room
• Move Upper School into Hood Manor
• Develop Library and Computer Suite
• Improve the parking situation

**Objective:** Expand care provision

• Develop afternoon care until 6pm including hot meals by way of afternoon clubs and integrate with teacher training programme
• Develop summer camps also as taster sessions for Waldorf education
• Consider opportunities with other organisations here
• Purchase school bus and offer pick-up and drop-off service

**Focus Area: Education**

**Commitment:** Maintaining our idealism and ensuring the continued enrichment of the school's educational life.

**Guiding question:** How can we provide a learning experience for children that prepares them to thrive intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually in the 21st century?

**Objective:** Establish class 11 and 12 with a robust and rigorous Waldorf curriculum

• Complete work on costings, recruitment, staffing and regulatory approval
• Launch class 11 in September 2017
• Launch class 12 in September 2018

**Objective:** Explore, plan and implement separation of Lower School (class 1 to 8) into Lower School (1 – 6) and Middle School (7 and 8)

**Objective:** Review Learning Support and develop a new vision

**Objective:** Put reflective practice (inner work) at the heart of professional development for staff
  • Reducing the pace and pressure during term-time → see Focus Area: Management and Organisation
  • Create more space and time for individual and group inner work and study
  • Focus on the development of people by creating a large professional development and training budget of £50,000 – this may initially be used to set-up Teacher Training programme which in turn will improve professional development capacity

**Objective:** Articulate our picture of child development fully integrated across the school from early years to class 12 and fit for 21st century England
  • Create regular workshops that inform parents and community
  • New articulation to help teachers to communicate more easily with parents across the departments
  • This will help all members of staff as well as the parent body and wider community to understand why and how we do what we do

**Objective:** Develop the curriculum implementation and focus areas
  • Review, update and implement the school development and improvement plan annually
  • Improve the provision for and develop a clear framework for maths across the school
  • Improve the provision for Eurythmy

**Objective:** Establish Steiner teacher training similar to Michael Hall School
  • Drastically improve our teacher mentoring provision
  • Improves cover situation
  • Can help with learning support work
  • Enables Afternoon Care expansion
  • Replace Teaching Assistants

**Objective:** Expand Early Years provision
  • Create a dedicated Parent & Child facility
  • Expand back into fourth kindergarten as feeder for stable school from class 1 to class 12

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**Focus Area: Community and Business Development**

**Commitment:** Creating a Productive and Rewarding Community Experience by Extending the School’s Core Provision, Reinventing Volunteering and Professionalising Fundraising Activities

**Guiding question:** How can we foster and support a community that supports our mission through volunteering, charitable giving, advocacy, outreach, and business activity?

**Objective:** Re-energise and mobilise the community and parental involvement but in a format suited to the circumstances of 21st century South Devon and which considers other strategic objectives
  • Put in place comprehensive induction processes at each level of the school as well as for new entrants
• Establish parental development programme parallel to children’s journey focussed on enhancing understanding of the Waldorf approach to child development
• Build on PTA
• Enhance communication to develop an informed and proud community of current and alumni parents, students and supporters of the school
  o Launch alumni association in 2016/17
• Increase parental engagement through the provision of structured and supported volunteering and leadership opportunities
• Engage community in upkeep of grounds and gardens
• Parents room to double up as café/ shop space to create space for the unquantifiable but palpable capacity within the parent body to unfold
• This will also be guided by the formal engagement with the school through PTA

Objective: **Create separate community enterprise at the intersection of volunteering, professional skillsets and business development activities**
• Set-up café/shop and kitchen (with a view to processing barn together with BD farm up the road) as separate entity which can also employ for specific posts but which meets the school’s need for ROI on providing space and facilities

Objective: **Reach out into the wider community**
• Transforming ourselves from an island into a centre for the wider community
• Strengthen and promote the school’s partnerships with the wider community
• Reach out into the wider community through café, shop and public talks on current themes