

FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN 5 – 7 YEARS IN STEINER WALDORF (SW) SETTINGS IN ENGLAND

In Steiner Waldorf early childhood provision, children are grouped in mixed ages, generally 3 – 6 years (3-4 year groups).

Differentiation is seen in developmental terms according to guidance given by Rudolf Steiner. Differentiation is provided in many kindergartens for the 'older children' (5 & 6 years), e.g. activities, stories, expectations of differing tasks etc. (See ***SW Embedded Curriculum*** and ***Curricular purpose of some activities, 5-7 years'*** docs.) Most kindergartens offer separate provision for the pre Class 1 children, where they come together for a day, or afternoon, or in some cases, a whole class transition group for anything from a term to a year. The activities provided for the older children are more structured and are intended to extend their learning in an effort to strengthen the 'will forces' and self-regulation, widening and deepening children's experiences in a planned manner which is related to the individual children's needs and interests, and the whole group work.

All settings should also show differentiated learning and work including progression between the EYFS (3-5 years) and the older child before they start formal schooling in Class 1.

The EYFS Statutory Framework (England) applies to children under statutory school age and for this age range, a read-over document is supplied by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, showing how the activities provided in a Steiner Waldorf (SW) kindergarten meets the EYFS guidance. (See ***EYFS/Steiner Interpretation and Readover***). Scotland, Wales and Ireland have their own statutory curricula for this age.

Exemptions and modifications are granted by the Secretary of State for Education (England) against those areas of the EYFS (3-5 Framework) which conflict with the SW early childhood ethos. (See ***SW Exemptions and Modification to EYFS***)

In England Steiner schools with kindergartens need to consider the context of the *Independent School Standards Regulation* (inspectors will focus on this), which include:

- The written policy, plans and schemes of work 2(1)(b)
- Take account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils including those pupils with an Education and Health Care (ECH) plan. 2(1)(b)(i)
- Full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (5+years), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.

Inspectors of Steiner schools (with kindergartens) in England will ask for a 'rationale of activities' to show progression for children of 5 and 6 years, from the EYFS to Class 1 (6+ years), as the written curriculum as set out in ***The Tasks and Content of the Steiner-Waldorf Curriculum*** begins at Class 1. Chapter 6 includes a section on early years care and education where the aims and objectives are described, but no specific curriculum is provided. The description of the learning process pre formal education is that, in the first seven years, the young child learns to be at home in the physical body, developing an orientation in space and acquiring the initial, fundamental developmental capacities of uprightness, speech and thought. The content of the child's whole environment is the learning context; the child 'imitates' the people and the agencies that are in his/her environment. This imitating gesture serves to imprint on the child's will the content and the quality of what is learnt. In the nursery or kindergarten, experiential learning, discovery through creative play and intensive social interaction with peers and teachers constitute the main education themes. Awareness of the complexities of the mother tongue and number is acquired through informal play and social interaction. These are not taught didactically. In the seventh year, the child's forces finish forming the physical body and become active in developing the facility for independent, representational, pictorial thinking. Class 1 is the first introduction to a formal schooling process.

READ OVER DOCUMENTS for 5 & 6 year olds.

Providing read over documents will help the kindergarten staff to understand the rationale for activities provided and to be able to speak to them in terms of development and progression. In addition, these documents, together with the child profile and other assessment/ transition documents (Class 1 readiness checks some of which are built into the Child assessment framework and policy) will inform the reports for parents, and the Class 1 teacher of what the children are fully capable of when entering school. The read-over documents include:

- The ***Older Child in the Steiner Waldorf Setting: THE EMBEDDED CURRICULUM***. This takes the areas of learning from the EYFS and the Independent School Standards and identifies the activities currently used by many kindergartens, setting these against each area to show what learning might be expected from the activity. This enables progression to be shown from the EYFS for the older children. It also shows what the adults provide or prepare, and how they deliver the curriculum.
- ***The Curricular Purpose of some Activities for 5-6 year olds*** document. This shows the specific activities provided under the subject headings.

It is essential that each setting, if necessary, adapts the contents of the documents to suit their activities, bearing in mind that although this and the other documents could relate to other younger children, the focus is on what is prepared and planned for the 5 and 6 year old, and what they know and can do.

Scotland, Ireland and Wales can change the headings to relate to their respective curricular requirements.

We are indebted to Janni Nicol for all her work on this documents over many years.

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