



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Steiner Education?

The prime purpose of Steiner Education is to support and educate children so that their own innate and unique human qualities may be fulfilled. This is the task of the educator in each Steiner school. It is a worldwide movement that complies with the requirements of relevant education authorities around the world.

Our approach is formed out of a developmental approach to pedagogy. Steiner education is an integrated and holistic education, designed to provide for the balanced development of human intellectual and cognitive faculties, artistic and imaginative capacities, and practical life skills. Each Steiner school operates in sync with their own unique contexts – locations, seasons, cultures and diversities are all considerations that weave together to contribute to an enriched learning experience.

### What is the difference between a Steiner School and other primary schools?

The goal of Steiner schooling is “to produce individuals who are able, in and of themselves, to impart meaning to their lives.” We aim to educate the whole child, “head, heart and hands”. The curriculum places specific emphasis on the need to balance academic subjects with artistic and practical activities. The use of artistic activities within the syllabus supports children’s engagement with their work.

Some distinctive features of Steiner education include:

- An emphasis on imaginative play in the early years of schooling,
- The curriculum content, cognitive development and skill building are approached in a pictorial and imaginative way,
- Teachers use narrative, creative writing, visual arts, music, drama, and movement to foster their students inner thinking, feeling and willing life (head, heart and hands), allowing them to engage fully in academic content,



- Certain activities which are considered extras at mainstream schools are vital activities in Steiner schools. These are activities such as singing, gardening, caring for animals, handcraft, and festivals to name a few,
- All children learn practical skills such as knitting, sewing, crocheting and, age according, metal work/woodwork,
- Students are taught the Main Lesson, which is an integrated, thematic block of work taking up the morning lesson of each day for a 3-week period. The Main Lesson allows children to study a subject in depth,
- Children produce their own Main Lesson books which become their workbooks, creating them during each Main Lesson cycle. They essentially construct their own textbooks which record their experiences and what they have learned in class,
- The use of electronic media by younger children is strongly discouraged. The focus in a Steiner School is on direct experience and the transmission of knowledge from one human being to another. Parents at Steiner schools may be asked to limit their children's screen time,
- There is an emphasis on beautiful surroundings at Steiner Schools which enrich the children's experience and support their learning. Landscaped and ecologically sustainable gardens, the rich cultural and aesthetic nature of the built environment, and the natural fibres and handmade toys in the Kindergarten are all a reflection of what is embedded within the education system,
- Steiner schools are all inclusive, co-educational, and non-secular and
- Often Steiner schools are independent, governed by a Governing Body and/or operated daily by a College of Teachers or Executive Management Team. The operational structure is egalitarian in nature not hierarchical.

#### What is the philosophy behind Steiner education?

Consistent with his philosophy called anthroposophy (translatable as the "wisdom of humanity"), Rudolf Steiner designed a form of schooling that nurtures children's imaginations and is responsive to what he identified as the developmental phases in childhood. He thought that schools should cater to the needs of children rather than to the demands of the



government or economic forces, so he developed a style of education that encourages creativity, practicality, and free-thinking.

#### What is the curriculum at a Steiner school?

The Steiner curriculum is both comprehensive and integrated. It is designed to be responsive to the various phases of a child's development. The main subjects, such as maths, science, language and history, are taught in Main Lesson blocks. The total Steiner curriculum has been likened to an ascending spiral: subjects are revisited several times over the course of the primary years, but each new exposure affords greater depth and new insights into the subject at hand. A typical curriculum would look something like the following:

#### **Classes 1-3**

- Pictorial introduction to the alphabet, writing, reading, spelling, poetry and drama,
- Folk and fairy tales, fables, legends, Old Testament stories,
- Numbers, basic mathematical processes of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division (the Four Processes),
- Nature stories,
- Building and gardening,

#### **Classes 4-6**

- Writing, reading, spelling, grammar, poetry and drama,
- Research,
- Norse myths, history and stories of Ancient civilizations, the Roman world, biography,
- Review of the four mathematical processes, fractions, percentages and geometry, business Maths and
- Local and world geography, botany and elementary physics (heat, light and sound).

#### **Primary specialist subjects taught include:**

- Craft: knitting, crochet, sewing, cross stitch, basic weaving, toy making and woodwork,



- Music: singing, recorder, string instruments and percussion instruments,
- Foreign language, at LTSS this is the Italian language (written and spoken) and cultural activities (festivals, food, projects and performances),
- Movement: P.E, dance and movement,
- Extra Lesson: Education support.

### **Classes 7 – 9**

Middle school is an exciting syllabus, underpinned by Steiner curriculum, with a focus on project based and interest-based learning. This seeks to individualise learning so that students themselves take responsibility for the curriculum with the support and guidance of their teachers, peers, school community (including parents) and the wider community.

The aim of Steiner education is to provide enjoyable and relevant learning through deep engagement and creative endeavour, and to develop ethical, capable individuals who can contribute to society with initiative and purpose. It recognises that we learn not just with our heads but with our hearts and our hands also and in this knowledge, we seek to nurture the whole child.

At LTSS, we love learning and so we strive to foster a love of learning in all our students that will last them a lifetime. Middle school students will spend most of their time with their class teacher and have the benefit of specialist teachers.

### **Middle School Specialist subjects include:**

#### **Design/Technologies**

- Digital Technologies
- Food
- Textiles
- Woodwork



- Metalwork

#### The Arts

- Visual Art
- Music
- Drama

LOTE (language other than English) - Italian

#### Why is the curriculum delivered through stories?

When children listen to stories they engage with the human voice. They learn to listen and concentrate. Primary aged children think in pictures, and hearing stories develop this image-making power. Children respond emotionally to stories and it is this emotional response that the children remember, and it is this that makes the lesson content memorable.

During their time at a Steiner Kindergarten and primary school, children receive an immense gift in the form of many of the great stories from human civilization. These stories are the more vivid for being told by their teachers rather than read. The stories in some way recapitulate the development of mankind. In Kindergarten children listen to Fairy stories where good overcomes evil and magical events are the norm. In Class 3 they hear stories from Biblical times where right and wrong are clearly defined, but by Class 4 they are told stories of the Norse gods and goddesses who were only too human in their desires. Class 5 stories cover the stirring epics of the Ramayana and Gilgamesh and the lives of world religious leaders, Buddha, Christ and Mohammad, to name a few. With the study of the Greeks, a more historical perspective arises which is followed in Class 6 by stories of Roman conquest and the inspiring biographies of more recent heroes and heroines such as Gandhi, Shackleton, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Helen Keller and David Unaipon.

#### What is the Main Lesson?

The first daily period of concentrated study every morning is known as the Main Lesson. This is an integrated thematic topic that is studied for 3 weeks. This system of study has many advantages as children are able to study the subject in some depth.



Within the Main Lesson period there will be a variety of experiences – recapitulation of previous work, oral, dramatised or written recounts of stories, skills practice, illustration and new material to absorb. Much attention is paid to oral work and collaborative learning.

### How is Literacy taught?

Steiner education is deeply bound up with the oral tradition, typically beginning with the teacher telling the children fairy tales throughout Kindergarten and Class 1. The oral approach is used all through Steiner education: mastery of oral communication is seen as being integral to all learning. Direct reading instruction follows the teaching of writing. During Class 1, the children explore how our alphabet came about, discovering how a letter form can evolve out of a pictograph. Writing thus evolves out of the children's art, and their ability to read evolves from the daily re-reading of their written work.

By Class 1, children may be ready to bring readers home. Points of grammar, genres and spelling are introduced in an imaginative way. Punctuation, for example, is introduced in Class 2. During their learning journey at LTSS, children are immersed in stories taken not only from around the world but from throughout human history. They listen to the folk wisdom in fairy tales, the human qualities in animal fables, the deeds of great people and their connection with nature. They hear the great legends of the Old Testament and wonderful mythologies, including those of the Norse and the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome. These stories give the child a meaningful picture of what it is to be human.

Class teachers are focused on the elements that form the building blocks of reading:

- Phonic awareness, the ability to discriminate between and manipulate the sounds of our language,
- Phonological awareness, the ability to understand and break the code of reading,
- Semantic knowledge, the understanding of the world which gives reading its meaning and
- Fluency, the ability to read at a rate that allows for comprehension.



Children learn to read at different rates, and with varying needs for support. LTSS provides for a range of modes of literacy support so that children see the development of reading as an individual process in which they are well-supported but never pressured.

Language, the medium through which learning is communicated and expressed in all Key Learning Areas, is central to children's intellectual, social and emotional growth. Experiences in speaking, listening, writing and reading in a wide range of contexts are integral to this development. All Main Lessons (whatever the subject) contribute to the enhancement of literacy skills and an appreciation of the qualities of language which we hope will become a source of lifelong enjoyment.

#### How is Numeracy taught?

The capacity for abstract thinking is nurtured by introducing mathematical concepts through the imagination and in a concrete way, then by developing skills and knowledge through the written word, problem-solving, analysing and synthesising.

Throughout the year, at each class level, there are Main Lessons which predominantly contribute to the development of mathematics outcomes. These Main Lessons are used as a vehicle for introducing and deepening mathematical skills, knowledge and understandings.

#### Why do Steiner Schools discourage TV watching and other forms of electronic media?

The reasons for this have as much to do with the physical effects of the medium on the developing child as with the questionable content of much of the programming. Current research continues to highlight that electronic media can seriously hinder the development of a child's imagination, a faculty which is central to the healthy development of the individual. Computer use by young children is also discouraged. The presentation of many rapidly changing images on the screen can affect the child's ability to concentrate. Most importantly, when a child is spending hours sitting in front of a screen, he or she is not being active, playing, engaging with others or exploring the world for themselves. Likewise, social media platforms are not appropriate for children.



Parents/caregivers are asked to carefully consider LTSS' standpoint on this topic and whether they can actively align with the school in support of their own children, as well as the other children in the LTSS community. We understand that this is a challenging task given the time and place in which we live, but it is an integral part of the philosophy of LTSS.

#### Why do Steiner Schools celebrate seasonal festivals?

Seasonal festivals serve to connect humanity with the rhythms of nature and of the cosmos. The festivals originated in ancient cultures yet have been adapted over time. To join the seasonal moods of the year, in a festive way, is believed to benefit the inner life of human beings. Celebrating is an art. There is joy in the anticipation, the preparation, the celebration itself, and the memories.

#### What role does imagination play in the development of children?

Einstein stated that "Reason is an experiment carried out in the imagination." Imagination is the ability to think in pictures. While this is the primary mode of thinking for primary aged children, it forms the basis of abstract thought in the high school years and beyond. The ability to empathise with others is a faculty of the imagination, as is the ability to visualize in order to be creative on every level, whether it be the creation of a work of art or the creation of new ideas or social structures.

#### What role does handcraft play in the curriculum?

*"Children who learn while they are young to make practical things by hand in an artistic way, for the benefit of themselves and for others, will not be strangers to life or to other people when they are older. They will be able to form their lives and their relationships in a social and artistic way so that their lives will be enriched. Out of their ranks can come, technicians and artists, who will know how to solve the problems and tasks"*

*-Rudolf Steiner*

Through handcraft lessons, there is an acquisition of lifelong useful and practical skills such as hemming, knitting, crocheting, sewing, and woodworking. Age-old traditional and "time-binding" skills are kept alive by teaching and practice.





Handcraft is as much about cultivating a sense of beauty as it is about acquiring different skills. Projects should be useful as well as beautiful and all should have a purpose. This encourages the attitude that human endeavour is significant and can make a difference in this world. Enthusiasm and joy in the creative practical process are encouraged. Individual abilities are appreciated and accommodated, even celebrated.

There is an appreciation for handmade articles as opposed to mass-produced items, an ability to value and feel the difference of using an object that the children have imbued with their own creative spirit and love.

The completion of tasks, sometimes after many hours of effort, builds the self-esteem of our students, while everything that a child makes during handcraft has a purpose and so is a worthwhile task.

#### Do Steiner schools offer sport?

Through our P.E program, we provide the child with experiences that will contribute to a healthy body, strong self-esteem, positive relationships, the ability to make appropriate choices and a sense of connection to their world.

The climate and open spaces in our school encourage our children to be physically active. We have an outside multi-purpose court which can facilitate the delivery of outdoor games, such as 4 square, basketball, netball and tennis. Additionally, termly sport incursions, swimming and camp programs are offered.

A child's relationship to games and play is important. Children need to become 'lost' in the joy of the game. This inward activity gives meaning to the vast array of important physical skills that are needed for successful learning and for balanced physical development.

#### Why do the children call teachers by their first name?

Last century when students were first invited to call their teachers by their first name this must have seemed a radical departure from the norm. By doing this, however, we



acknowledge that the authority of the teacher does not rely on the distance between the teacher and the class but rather on the relationship of mutual respect between them.

**My Kindergarten aged child is already reading/writing/counting. Will s/he get bored in Kindergarten?**

AT LTSS, our experience is that this is not the case. Although there is no formal academic work in Kindergarten, it is a very busy and structured place with a predictable routine or rhythm to each day. Learning takes place through self-directed play and teacher lead activities. Children are engaged in creative play, cooking the morning tea, singing, listening to stories, learning to finger knit or French knit, digging in the sandpit, learning to work cooperatively and much more.

Some children in the Kindergarten on occasion have already spontaneously learned to read or to count. This is generally not an issue and they may well continue to practice these skills in an informal way at home. Next year in Class 1 they will enjoy the pictorial introduction of what to them are familiar letters because it is done in such an artistic way that it feels like something new.

**My child is very gifted academically? What would you do for him/her?**

An all-around, harmonious development for all children is our first aim and there is no streaming in our school according to ability. The reason for this is that growth and mental development go hand in hand. The basic pattern of human growth is fairly constant – nine months pregnancy, walking at about twelve months, followed by talking, etc. This is true of all children and it is therefore sensible to give the same pedagogical material to all children in the same age group. Naturally, some will have a greater mastery than others in certain subjects. The teachers can accommodate this so while children receive the same basic concepts, the form that work takes can vary within the class. For instance, at ten we teach fractions. A child that masters the processes quickly can be given more challenging problems, but all are doing fractions. A good teacher will provide each child with the necessary stimulation even within the one subject, expecting from each child what each is capable of.

**Do you give homework?**

- Yes, but the nature of homework changes throughout the Primary years:



- Parents are encouraged to read to or hear their children read every night,
- Parents are asked to support regular violin practise,
- After Class 4 there is much routine work which can be practised at home – spelling and maths as well as learning times tables are examples and
- In Class 5 and 6, homework, in the form of projects, allows for guided research work and gives the children extra practice at research skills in readiness for Middle School and
- In Middle School, a regular homework task sheet is set for the term. Main Lesson books may come home to be finished off.

Lastly, homework can give parents a better understanding of what their child is experiencing at school.

#### Are Steiner Schools religious?

Classes in religious doctrine are not part of the Steiner curriculum, and children of all religious backgrounds attend Steiner Schools. Steiner schools, however, tend to be spiritually oriented. The historic festivals of Christianity and of other major religions may be observed in the classrooms and in school assemblies and inspiring stories from all major religions are shared with the children.

#### How do Steiner Schools behaviour manage?

Discipline, like everything else in Steiner schools, aims to be age appropriate.

In Kindergarten, the routine of the day provides a predictable structure for children. This routine provides children with security and clear expectations of behaviour. The Kindergarten programme focuses on the development of children's social skills through play and as such provides for much social learning, influencing behaviour. The older children in the group act as a role model for the younger ones providing an example of behaviour and social expectations.



As the children get older, the respect with which the teachers treat the children engenders respect. Misdemeanours are addressed with appropriate consequences in line with Restorative Justice Practices.

Further, Leaning Tree Steiner School is a part of the global initiative, The Virtues Project™. The Virtues Project™ nurtures our children in the skills and qualities they need to reach their potential in school and in life. Although virtues are the oldest practices in the world, they are essential to the true goal of education – intelligence plus character. The project outlines 52 gifts of character, which guide our social-emotional curriculum as well as our behaviour management approach. Explicit teaching of the Virtues assists in creating a positive and harmonious school environment.

#### How will my child go moving from a Steiner School to a school in another system, either government or independent?

Generally, transitions to other schools are fine, when anticipated. Transitions in the lower classes, particularly between Class 1 and Class 4, or midway through the year, should be considered very seriously because of the significant differences between the two curriculum styles and particularly in the timing of curriculum delivery.

#### How will my child go moving from a school in another system, either government or independent, to a Steiner School?

We have found that children adapt very quickly, because the class they are entering will be welcoming, homelike and children will find it very easy to settle in. It is often the children from other schooling systems who most appreciate the liveliness of the curriculum.

#### As a parent, how can I be more involved in the school?

Parents are encouraged to participate in many aspects of the school's life. There are plenty of opportunities at many different levels. Some examples include being on the Parent and Friends Action Team, Class Representatives, fundraising events like our annual Spring Fair, Busy Bees or as parent help, assisting in classrooms. Parent volunteers provide invaluable support to LTSS as they can offer expertise through a wide variety of areas, enriching our community and our curriculum.



### What is anthroposophy?

The term “anthroposophy” comes from the Greek, “Anthropos” (human) and “Sophia” (wisdom). Rudolf Steiner, through study and practised observation, deduced that one can awaken to his/her own inner nature and the spiritual realities of outer nature and the cosmos. The awareness of these relationships brings a greater reverence for all of life. Steiner and many individuals since who share his views have applied this knowledge in various practical and cultural ways in communities around the world. Most notably, Steiner schools have made a significant impact on the world. Bio-dynamic farming and gardening greatly expand the range of techniques available to organic agriculture. Anthroposophical medicine and pharmacy, although less widely known, are subjects of growing interest.

It should be stressed that while anthroposophy forms the theoretical basis of the teaching methods used in Steiner Schools, it is not taught to the students and teachers may or may not be anthroposophists themselves.

### Recommended Reading

Some of these titles are available in our parent library, located in the Starflower Kindergarten, others are readily available to purchase online:

- Baldwin, Rahima: You Are Your Child’s First Teacher.
- Brown-Braun, Betsy: You’re not the Boss of Me.
- Carlgren, Frans: Education Towards Freedom.
- Davy & Voors: Lifeways – Working with Family Questions.
- Finser, Torin: School as Journey.
- Gloeckler, Michaela: A Healing Education.
- Konig, Karl: Brothers and Sisters.
- Konig, Karl: The First Three Years of the Child.
- Oldfield, Lynne: Free to Learn.
- Petrash, Jack: Understanding Waldorf Education.
- Selg, Peter: The Essence of Waldorf Education.
- Stehlik, Tom: Each Parent Carries the Flame.



- Steiner, Rudolf: The Education of the Child.
- Steiner, Rudolf: The Kingdom of Childhood.

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Nurturing the Whole Child