



# Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Newsletter Summer 2015

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter for parents and friends of Steiner Waldorf education.

## National Children's Day 2015

This is an initiative of the Save Childhood Movement, and was organised this year in order to promote extended child initiated play. Laurel Farm Steiner Kindergarten near Bath was nominated as one of their Play Champions, with a feature on the website. [See website here](#)

Some of our Steiner Waldorf kindergartens celebrated National Children's Day 2015 by doing outdoor activities, a special play day, or, as in the case of St Michael kindergarten, a festival with the parents in their woodland:



'We celebrated National Children's Day 2015 on Saturday 9th May with an afternoon of free play in our woodland garden. Around sixty people with children from birth to nine years of age came and enjoyed an afternoon of play, relaxation and enjoyment. Children made caterpillars and butterflies and flew them around the garden on wooden sticks, whilst parents helped build a fire in our outdoor barbecue, collecting wood from around the garden. Once the fire was burning well, we cooked masses of popping corn in a big saucepan over the fire which was eagerly eaten out of popcorn cones coloured in by the children.

Some families explored our school gardens, picnicking under trees and following pathways through the bluebell woods whilst others relaxed and chatted with old and new friends in the garden. We ended the day with laughter, dancing and singing around the maypole!

**Leigha, Katie and Jeannette, for the Early Years team.**

## Safe to Learn:

Learning to manage aggression and form positive social relationships is vital and raises questions of concern in schools and workplaces everywhere. Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship recently organised a conference with Dr. Tessabella Lovemore, Marjatta van Boeschoten and Fran Russell. The aim was to explore bullying in order to develop deeper understanding and appreciation of what is involved and, through this, to identify useful strategies and interventions for dealing with bullying. Members of staff from Schools, Academies and kindergartens met at Elmfield School. We looked at developing and maintaining strong inclusive (anti-bullying) practice in our schools and early childhood settings. We hope to organise a follow up conference in the autumn. A small expert team is being formed to review matters of policy and practice in order to prepare for this.

**Kevin Avison**

## BBC Little Painting Challenge:

Ruby Karatzas from class 8 at South Devon Steiner School was one of the finalists in the BBC's Little Painting Challenge. She did extremely well as her postcard sized picture was in the final 5 out of 27,000 entries and was highly commended by the judges. Her picture was on display at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester for the month of May.



## Transitions Conference, Goetheanum, Dornach 2015 - A Students Perspective

As a first year North of England Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Seminar student, it was quite something for me to attend this international conference on 'Transitions' at the Goetheanum in Switzerland, (with a little financial help from the International Kindergarten Association [www.iaswece.org](http://www.iaswece.org))

As I ascended a series of gravel pathways towards the giant building on the hill in Dornach, I couldn't help but notice the similarity in the architectural forms of the surrounding buildings which emulate Steiner's ergonomic design. The Goetheanum feels like a cross between a Steiner museum university, and a Cathedral.



The conference was attended by over 540 people from more than 60 countries. Throughout the conference, many speakers from various parts of the world offered their wisdom on the theme. It is testament to my course content and our tutor's teaching abilities that I was able to easily comprehend the topics and themes mentioned within the seminars. I learned a lot also about the transitions of all age groups, Birth, 3, 6, 9, 12 and 14 years, and throughout life. The workshops were inspiring forums for further exploration into specific topics and the evening entertainment was culturally enriching and uplifting. I returned to England feeling nourished, rejuvenated, inspired and ready to reflect upon all of the invaluable gifts that I had received at the Goetheanum; it was a worthwhile trip indeed.

NESWEC: [www.neswec.org.uk](http://www.neswec.org.uk)

**Ruth Hage, Lancashire.**

## A Straw Bale Nest

Co -Creating Robin's Nest Early Years Setting



In September 2012 we set out to provide a Steiner inspired, home away from home childcare setting in an old cottage in the grounds of Emerson College, Sussex. We ran this setting as registered childcare providers with Waldorf teaching qualifications and experience. We felt it was important that families on low incomes could access this provision through the state funding and childcare tax credits. This was a fundamental requirement, as we wanted the setting to be fully inclusive to those who would not otherwise be able to access Waldorf Care and Education. Along our journey and with great support from our parent body and

community we grew, organically into a team of 5 staff including an Anthroposophical Doctor, Eurythmist and 2 assistants. By 2014 we had a constellation of 12 children ranging from 16 months to 6 years old.

However, the cottage, which enabled our growth, was put up for sale and this became a great opportunity for growth and renewal. We asked the question, what does this community need and what kind of model should we create as a sustainable solution for not only our setting but society today and the future? The answer became clear with the resources and the creativity that imbued those around us: we would build a straw bale house in the heart of the grounds of Emerson.

Our new impulse had all the ingredients, an architect with 20 years of experience of building straw bale houses, a dynamic parent body, creative and skilled students from the Emerson College and a supportive community. We decided to temporarily house our setting in a yurt in the woodlands at Emerson while beginning this process, and began to look at sites and logistics. We set to work building relations with new neighbours and creating a space. We decided all materials would be organic/biodynamic and would use local tradesman. Parents were sent into our hazel woods to coppice, they then wove a wonderful hurdle fence around our area of land as a holding. A little hobbit kitchen was built by a passing carpenter who had heard about our build and wanted to help. Mothers cooked around the cob oven and held the space while the men and women folk hammered away. By the first week of September our wood burner arrived, the hearth at the centre of our new home.

Our morning and weekly rhythm stayed the same but everything took a little longer than usual and the question soon arose: Had the needs of our children changed due to the setting? As synchronicity has it, during this time a conference was held by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, and this was addressed by the speaker Helle Heckman from Denmark who explored the theme of nature connection. Our question had been answered. We would lengthen our days, spend more time in nature, walks to the farm and woods and slow our pace down creating more time and space for our children and benefiting from the healing properties of nature.

The build will be run as a course where students will learn the skills to be able to go away and build straw bale houses for themselves. Our long-term vision is to create a children's center, providing a service where the whole family can access support through various Anthroposophical therapeutic services. We believe we have also begun this process through our current practice. This impulse is largely connected to the living and learning community at Emerson College and it's hoped to be part of the rebirth and healing process which is taking part there presently. [See our website here](#)

**Hannah Roberts**

### **York Steiner School:**

Our school is one of 8 finalists in the highly prestigious [TES School Awards](#) category for 'Creative School of the Year'. This honour is based on a celebration of how we hold creativity at the centre of our pedagogy, from Early Years right through to Class 8. Not only this, but the judges look for a school which inspires creativity in the children and in the school community. We are lucky to have an incredibly supportive community which embraces and joins with our creative approach, and it is fantastic that this has been recognised at a national level.

As if this were not amazing enough, our Class 4 teacher, **Fiona Dudley**, has been recognised as one of the best teachers in the country. Fiona is one of 5 shortlisted for 'Teacher of the Year in a Primary School' in the highly respected and very high profile Pearson Teaching Awards.



## **Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship**

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