

Developmental Profiles

Early Years/KG: Ages 0-7

Rudolf Steiner said that “with physical birth the human body is exposed to the physical environment of the external world...during this period the physical organs must take on certain shapes.” (Educating Steiner Today, Rudolf Steiner Press, 2008). Avison and Rawson go on to say that as well as growing and physically developing “the young child begins to relate to other people, becoming a member of human society as represented by the extended circle of those family, friends and others the child encounters.” (Tasks and Contents of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum Floris Books, 2014).

In addition, The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum Framework 2021 states that “...the frequency and range of children’s personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them...” This is the time in a child’s development when they take in through their lower senses all that they see, hear, touch, smell and experience emotionally, and recreate their understanding of the world around them through their actions, i.e. play, drawings, speech etc. Young children use their will forces, imitation and imagination to explore the world around them and begin to form ideas and concepts about the world they see and experience that will form the bedrock of all future learning and understanding. In summary, all that the child from birth to seven sees, hears and experiences will begin to develop their sense of time and place, and that of the people around them.

Class 1: Ages 6-7

“One of the main characteristics of children between the seventh and ninth year [age 6-8] is their desire to learn, without any need to form their own judgements. Memory, imagination, enjoyment of rhythmical repetition and a desire for universal concepts presented in pictorial form, come to the fore at this stage. Children retain a bias towards accepting the authority of the adult world, but this is not now a matter of imitation but of concentrating attention upon major role models; these affect the child largely through the feeling of their words or moral strength of their actions. A child’s inner question to the teacher is: ‘Can you see who I really am?’ and ‘Can you help me encounter the world?’. This determines the teacher’s position and relationship in regard to the child. These basic questions are answered in and through the lessons which aim not only to teach about experiencing the world but also to let the children actually experience the world. The teacher who succeeds in meeting these expectations set by the children will be accepted by them as an authority, something very different to attempting to control children as an authoritarian” Avison and Rawson, 2000.

Children in Class 1 are making the transition from Early Childhood education, with its focus on learning through imitation, practical activities and child-led play, into formal schooling, where there is more need to listen and follow. They become part of a new learning community, building on the learning habits, dispositions and attitudes that have been fostered in kindergarten, and learning new classroom routines and behaviours. Children are ready and eager to take on the challenge of this new phase of their learning. . .

Class 2: Ages 7-8

“Children in Class 2 are alert, active, energetic learners. Their developmental task is to learn the rules of the road, the codes of the ways and byways and the morality of exemplars, notably figures whose spirituality is still embedded in nature rather than urban society. The pictorial and linguistic elements of teaching should be cultivated to support children’s need to act increasingly out of inner images. Still ‘hunter-gatherers’ (before they become sedentary

farmers), this age group often require strong group activities with a clear focus. "(Rawson and Bransby 2021)

Class 3: Ages 8-9

"An experience of separation from a naive acceptance of the adult world takes place at around nine years of age, (known in Waldorf Education as 'the Rubicon') i.e. in Class 3, unconsciously at first, the children begin to question the teacher's authority, which they have hitherto accepted unquestioningly almost like a law of nature. They now want to know whether what the teacher says really is securely based on real experience of the world and of life. On the whole, this question remains at the subconscious level and is rarely put verbally, except in a growing tendency to criticise. The children now want to know that their admiration is justified. This means that a new teaching method is called for. The aspects of the world presented in school have to take account of this distancing process and the children need to be accompanied and supported in the right way as they step out of what often seems to be the inner 'glow' of childhood into the new reality of a world that is more differentiated and more diverse. But confronting them with the world 'as it really is' does not mean that they must immediately be presented with cold or sobering scientific facts entirely detached from human life. The 'loss of paradise' which is a common theme in nearly every mythology or folk memory, is increasingly felt by each individual child, calling for more individualised centring outwards to the environment. Between the ages of nine and twelve, rhythmical memory is at its strongest. The teaching method should draw on the child's natural interest in the world and structure the content rhythmically." Avison and Rawson, 2000

"The psychological and social challenge of the 'Rubicon' requires individuals to enter a new relationship to self and community that is no longer based on uncritical family acceptance and blood ties. This can be a painful experience of a loss of inner security and identification as children turn the question of purpose and identification towards the community and the natural world. They discover that human cooperation is the basis for a new sense of security and structure through cultural rules (measurement, syntax) and co-dependences, and the meeting of mutual needs as a basis for future economic thinking." Rawson 2021

Class 4: Ages 9-10

Having left the 'Garden of Eden' in class 3, the oneness with nature and the carefreeness nature so characteristic of childhood are now in the past and the class 4 child begins to feel a separateness from the world that they have not experienced before. As such, they begin to face the complexities of human emotions and motivations, with an increasingly keen awareness of the polarity of self and other and meets the world with growing capacities of thinking and feeling, and a longing for challenge and experiences of the self that extends beyond family. Faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges, the class 4 student looks for heroes which are presented to them in the characters of the Norse Legends, Beowulf and the Kalevala and we also hear the stories from local history of real-life heroes who have overcome great odds. The Norse Myths not only present us with heroes but also with tricksters, gods and goddesses with human foibles, with war, and adversarial relationships of all kinds. Through these stories the children begin to explore the complexities of their own emotions and motivations.

This change of outlook also brings individuality more strongly to the fore, and with it a greater degree of conflict in social interactions seem impossible to solve in the moment. This presents many opportunities for the children to face such situations in the classroom and gain the experience of overcoming them whilst at the same time being led towards a wholesome resolution in a safe environment, and in so doing, creating mutual respect, understanding and closer, more meaningful, friendships.

Class 5: Ages 10-11

“At this age the child attains a certain ease and grace of movement intrinsic to the age. Movement that is co-ordinated, balanced and harmonious is a keynote of the developmental phase. Psychologically, the ‘I’/world differentiation develops, the individual ‘will’ element begins to grow, the awareness of ‘self’ strengthens and socially, a powerful group dynamic can surface within a class, although the individual ego is very much a fledgling. Cognitively, children are more able to understand questions and phenomena in a realistic and reasoning manner. The pictorial element in thought process remains an important element in the child’s consciousness, although the understanding and formulation of concepts are beginning to depend less on the development of individualised images and thought pictures, and more on the development of a faculty for comprehending clear, matter-of-fact, sense-free concepts. Out of the growing memory powers, the sense for time has developed. Memory allows for looking back and planning the future and, combined with deepening feeling, for the emergence of conscience and responsibility.

This year marks the pivotal point between childhood and puberty and for a short moment each child is poised at the crest of the wave, marking the end of the first part of their school years. They reach standards of work hitherto never dreamed of. They identify totally with their work, they spend time embellishing it, bringing it closer to perfection. They are often proud of their work, whereas in Class 4 they could easily be dismissive about it.” Avison and Rawson, 2000

The students are in a transition from childhood to puberty, though this is very individual and girls tend to enter puberty before the boys. Some children are still very harmonious and fluid in their movements while others experience changes in their bodies. Many children are often strong willed, self-reliant and creative at this age and their intellect is emerging in ways that enable to begin to understand more abstract concepts, such as time and space. Their memory and linguistic skills reach a certain high point before the fragmentation, inarticulacy of puberty begins.

Class 6: Ages 11-12

“Generally the child’s growth begins to express itself in the skeleton. The limbs begin to lengthen; the child develops a tendency for awkward, angular movements. The twelve year old experiences the strength of gravity through the skeleton. The physical change is accompanied by the first experience of causation in the thinking realm, while psychologically, the child enters a phase which may be characterised as the ‘changeling’ period. The twelve year old witnesses what may be described as the death of childhood and the birth pangs of the individual.” Avison and Rawson 2000.

Class 7: Ages 12-13

“In Class 7 the pupils turn thirteen and become teenagers. Two fundamental gestures characterise this phase of life: an outer, active principle and the stirring of a dynamic, inner, state. An appetite for knowledge of, and about, world phenomena, mingles with a budding capacity for reflection and the first promptings of self-reflection. In this picture of emerging forces, the physical changes which establish sexual identity and capacity begin to manifest more clearly. The physical changes tend to be somewhat in advance of the psychological development. While a feeling and yearning for independence and solitude may be experienced, a certain anxiety, emotional sensitivity and embarrassment can run alongside. Sporadic bursts of energy and an appetite for expanding outer horizons vie with periods of lethargic heaviness and subdued introspection.” Avison and Rawson 2000

Class 8: Ages 13-14

“Class 8, during which the pupils pass their fourteenth birthday, signals the end of the class teacher period. Historically, this used to be the school-leaving age for many pupils and the entry point for an apprenticeship in a trade or craft. As such, Class 8 was seen as a ‘rounding off’ of the child’s schooling. With the establishment of Upper Schools and the raising of the school leaving age. . . it is no longer the case. . . However, Class 8 today continues to represent a certain ‘completion’ of a picture of the world and humanity’s place within it.

At fourteen, the pupils are in the midst of adolescence; bodily and psychological changes are well under way, so that in general, the young person seems more robust and the tenderness of the previous two years has lessened somewhat. Growth in height and sexual development are clearly established, with the onset of the ‘breaking voice’ in boys and the establishment of the menstrual cycle in girls. At this age, the world of ideas begins to take on meaning for the young adolescent and the critical faculties of the fourteen-year-old are noticeably sharper. Parts of the accepted framework - particular rules, for example - are subject to questioning scrutiny. Counter-balancing this critical tendency is the emergence of a reasoning or ‘reasonable’ side in the child.

The emergence of an independent life of feeling enters the ‘labour and delivery’ phase and the emotional turbulence which may attend this birth presents an important challenge to parents and teachers - now to accompany this birth or beginning of the emancipation of an individualised and independent inner life of thinking, feeling and intention without either being overwhelmed or swamped by the waves and tides of emotions, while being able to recognise that the state of crisis is part of a development... (young people) stand before new and unknown vistas with sharpening minds, tender hearts and limbs that struggle to reach an accommodation with gravity. By the end of this class, the pupils are already searching for new authorities and role models.” Avison and Rawson, 2000

Class 9: Ages 14-15

“The Class 9 student has reached a point in his or her development when inner life of feeling in its search for independence can take extreme forms. Steiner once characterised the feeling life of the fifteen-year-old akin to having been ‘spat out’ of the spiritual world. That means a radical distancing of the individual not only from the sense of being embedded in a secure world of certainties provided by family as much as by childhood innocence, but also from what that individual has learned. It requires the inner equivalent of relearning how to walk, talk and think.

Thinking, feeling and willing as activities are often entirely at odds with each other. This can manifest in great clarity of intellectual argument and total inability to act out the consequences of those ideas; fierce assertion of emotional independence (don’t tell me what to do, think or feel!) with almost childlike dependency and need for emotional comfort. On the other hand, there is a strong will to engage with life, which needs equally strong ideals as orientation. The Class 9 age student seeks and welcomes clarity of explanation, sympathetic understanding from adults around them and much open-hearted humour, the balm which smooths and makes bearable the inconsistencies of life.” Avison and Rawson, 2000

Class 10: Ages 15-16

“The Class 10 age student often appears after the summer holidays as different in marked ways. The often tumultuous nature of Class 9 has given way to the desire to know outer facts, information and details, which requires of them a new intellectual focus. Previously students have mostly been satisfied to know how it is, now they wish to know *how we know* how it is. In other words they seek not only information but insight. Thus behind every question of *what*,

is the question of *how*, of origins. How have things come to be as they are? Above all the students want to know how facts relate to *them* personally.

At this stage young people experience their 'I' strongly in harsh judgements of sympathy and antipathy, especially the conventional world of parents, authorities, routine and rules. The facades of 'bourgeois' existence need to be torn down to expose what lies naked behind them. They can be rigorous in their pursuit of perceived injustice... Dialogue with adults acquires a sharper, more existential tone. It is no longer merely an intellectual sport, as in Class 9. Now it is for real.

Class 10 students become in many ways the modern equivalent of the medieval knights or warriors. They adopt many elaborate rituals in their behaviour, their clothing becomes their armour... These warriors are, however, not graced with the arts of chivalry. There is often a sense of imprisonment in their own inner lives, with a corresponding urge to break out. There is deep pain to endure and slow-healing wounds to bear. The clothing is not only protective armour, it is camouflage, disguise and mask. There is a heightened consciousness, a kind of double awareness that adolescent is quiet aware of what s/he/they do/does, how it appears and just how transparent the disguise is.

The sheer unbridgeable gulf between appearance and reality is often experienced as truly tragic. This age is highly prone to suicide and other lesser acts of self-destruction. They seek groups in which to hide among those who feel the same way, speak the same language, enjoy the same irony, who understand each other. If Class 9 was still lit by the remaining glow of the class teacher period, by Class 10 the light has entirely faded. This is one of the most decisive points in the whole maturation process. The individual has arrived and is in grave danger of diffusing. The temptation to flight in inner or outer 'emigration' is strong, to run away from the world of challenges, to hang onto childhood's certainties, to blot out the light of day.

Two powerful new forces, that burgeoning sexuality and that of physical power, now further destabilise inner uncertainty. These tendencies have been there for a long time, for some individuals since Class 7. Yet in Class 10 most students have arrived at a certain low point in their overall development. The students are confronted with a significant threshold experience in their inner development. Those who successfully negotiate the transition over this threshold will have taken a major step in the individuation process. Those who don't, run the risk of falling prey to their own unredeemed soul forces. Much adult behaviour that we deem anti-social and immature is a reflection of these unredeemed adolescent forces perpetuated into adult life in often pathological ways.

The question of the 16 year old is 'who am I?'; it will find an answer when an answer when the individual discovers that who I am is not solely determined by what I have inherited and what has happened to me in my life so far, but also by something that has to do with *me*? The Class 10 student can begin to explore new territory using the new powers of judgement that can be developed during this year." Avison and Rawson, 2000

Class 11: 16-17

"This age marks a significant new beginning. If the interest of the Class 9 student is strongly directed outwards into the world, and interest of the Class 10 is strongly focused internally, the Class 11 student's interest is a synthesis of both these directions, namely insight. The younger person at this age wishes to understand the inner principles that determine not only the human being's inner life and configuration but also those of the wider world. It is a question of finding the balance between inner and outer.

This balance is especially critical in social life. Social conscience awakens with the same ability to empathise with the other person. What has previously been acutely experienced within one's own soul can be recognised in the other. Deeper dimensions to life now begin to reveal

themselves. The young person has to find an inner orientation between appearance and reality, between what is said and what is meant. Above all the seventeen-year-old is called upon to find his or her own way, to make personal and binding decisions, to consider the full consequences of their actions. Polarities in life have to be resolved, have to find a higher synthesis to new oneness. The choices to be made highlight that most characteristic experience of this age-doubt. Throughout the curriculum, the question of polarities requires an inner engagement from the student.” Avison and Rawson, 2000