

# Guide to the Early Years Foundation Stage in Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Settings





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# Foreword



In recent years early childhood education and care has been increasingly seen as vitally important in both a political and social context across the globe. In many respects we have come a long way since the pioneering work of Rachel and Margaret McMillan in Deptford nearly a century ago. This is to be sincerely welcomed, and the Steiner Waldorf movement in the UK commends the Westminster government's achievements in the last decade in increasing the profile accorded to early education within the policy agenda and the corresponding growth in the allocation of resources to the well-being of the young child.

In the new vocabulary of education and care words such as creativity, citizenship, emotional learning, childhood well-being, and personal, social and health education are current, alongside the public requirements for assessment and evaluation. One aspect depends on an implicit freedom for practitioners to use their vocational skills in areas that are basically immeasurable, together with their professional insight and sense of responsibility. The other seeks to make their services accountable to the general good by requiring a healthy degree of transparency and cooperation. This will always require a delicate balancing act that accordingly respects a diversity of approach and the individuality of each child, and also the needs of the community at large. Steiner education strives to bridge the divide by allowing children to grow into freedom and works with a methodology that stresses the importance of age-appropriateness, at the same time creating a secure environment of warmth and care within which the individuality of the child can find its own potential. Simultaneously it views teaching as a learning profession where we can all do better for the children in our care by working individually inwardly and also outwardly together, either as an institution or as colleagues across a wider spectrum, in a way that supports and enhances our professional development and competencies.

This booklet, as a product of this form of cooperation, illustrates precisely that process in both making Steiner Waldorf principles and practice more visible and available, while at the same time elucidating and developing them in the context of our times. This is an exercise we welcome as, in a way, it is a coming of age for Steiner Waldorf provision in this country. As a human endeavour a good quality early upbringing is crucial for the future of all our societies, and we wish to make our full contribution to this and simultaneously get better in what we do.

Christopher Clouder

Chair

Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship

# Introduction

## The Early Years Foundation Stage

*Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. When parents choose to use early years services they want to know that provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the framework that provides that assurance.*

The overarching aim of the EYFS is to help young children achieve the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being by:

- **setting the standards** for the learning, development and care young children should experience when they are attending a setting outside their family home, ensuring that every child makes progress and that no child gets left behind;
- **providing for equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice and ensuring that every child is included and not disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability;
- **creating the framework for partnership working** between parents and professionals, and between all the settings that the child attends;
- **improving the quality and consistency** in the early years sector through a universal set of standards which apply to all settings, ending the distinction between care and learning in the existing frameworks, and providing the basis for the inspection and regulation regime;
- **laying a secure foundation for future learning** through learning and development that is planned around the individual needs and interests of the child, and informed by the use of ongoing observational assessment.

The EYFS was given legal force from September 2008 and became mandatory for all schools and early years providers who care for children from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has their fifth birthday. Providers must follow the Statutory Framework for the EYFS and ensure their provision complies with the learning and development requirements (early learning goals, educational programmes and assessment arrangements) and the welfare requirements. In addition, the Statutory Framework contains guidance that all providers must have regard to and, if they decide to depart from it, they must have clear reasons for doing so and be able to demonstrate that their alternative approach achieves the ends described in this guidance.

This document gives the Steiner view on how the EYFS learning and development principles and goals might be addressed within the Steiner Waldorf early childhood curriculum, and will guide the reader through each section covering the principles, practice and learning and development requirements. This document does not replace the EYFS and has no legal effect. If any Steiner setting believes that its established principles about learning and development for young children conflict with elements of the EYFS learning and development requirements, it is open to the setting to apply for exemption from elements of the EYFS learning and development requirements. All applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Please visit the QCDA website for further information on how to apply: [www.qcda.gov.uk](http://www.qcda.gov.uk). If you would like to find out about Steiner practice, please contact the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship for advice.



It is expected that the reader is familiar with the EYFS Statutory Framework and guidance, as not all areas have been addressed, only those which in the view of Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship may benefit from some further explanation and clarification for Steiner Waldorf practitioners and others reading this document.

More information on the documents is referred to in the Appendix.

## Disclaimer

**The Department for Children, Schools and families (DCSF) does not endorse the Steiner interpretation of the EYFS learning and development requirements. This guidance is strictly the Steiner Waldorf interpretation of the Statutory Framework for the EYFS and that interpretation is not binding on the DCSF or Ofsted. Providers must follow the Statutory Framework for the EYFS and will be inspected by Ofsted against this Framework except where an exemption has been granted.**

## The Steiner Waldorf approach

The Steiner Waldorf approach is founded on the work of the Austrian philosopher and educationalist Rudolf Steiner, who wished to create a form of education which would help pupils achieve clarity of thought, sensitivity of feeling and strength of will. After listening to his lectures, the workers at the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart asked him to form a school for their children and in 1919 the first Waldorf School was founded. Today, from the *favelas* in Sao Paulo to the villages of Nepal, there are some 800 schools and over 2000 Early Years settings in over 60 countries serving children from birth to 18 years of age. The kindergartens began in 1926, and spread first amongst the European countries, then into the UK and USA, before spreading throughout the world.

The Steiner approach to the care of young children encompasses birth to seven years and includes parenting, home childcare and pregnancy. In addition to providing kindergartens (three to six plus), Steiner Early Childhood settings usually include sessions for parent and child groups (birth to three years), playgroups and nursery groups (two-and-a-half to four years), where an understanding of this approach is developed before the child starts kindergarten.

The Steiner Waldorf early childhood approach takes as given the interdependence of physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cognitive development. It takes account of the whole child, including his/her soul qualities, and believes that children's learning flourishes in a calm, peaceful, predictable, familiar and unhurried environment that recognises the child's sensory sensitivities. Young children need to experience the relevance of their world before they separate themselves from it and begin to analyse it in a detached way.

Learning gains meaning by its relevance to life and should not be separated from the business of daily living. The learning experience of children under the age of seven therefore is integrated and not subject-based. Mathematics and use of mathematical language, for example, might take place at the cooking table, where food is prepared (thinly sliced carrots make wonderful natural circles and have the added virtue of being able to be eaten later in soup!) and concepts such as addition and subtraction (or more or less), weight, measure, quantity and shape are grasped in a practical manner as part of daily life. Children are able to tell a story by 'reading' the pictures in a book, which develops verbal skills, frees the narrative from the printed text and encourages children to use their own words. Many children also act out or perform puppet shows and develop dramatic skills through working with narrative and dialogue in an artistic way. The conversations around the meal table give the children the opportunity to become familiar with listening and speaking, rhyming and riddles. Painting and drawing help with balance and symmetry, and craft activities also develop fine motor skills. The integration of these activities cultivates a love of language, develops speech and allows children time to become really familiar with the spoken word – the best preparation and foundation for the subsequent development of more formal literacy and numeracy.

# Section 1



## EYFS: Principles into practice

### Introduction

The following four EYFS themes and principles are intended to guide all Early Years practitioners working with children. Each principle has four commitments which guide practitioners in putting the principle into practice, thus supporting children in meeting the outcomes set out in the government's agenda for children, *Every Child Matters*, [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk). An overview of these principles can be found on the EYFS poster and further explanation is given in the colour-coded 'Principles into Practice' cards. The information below reflects, and is in line with, the layout of the EYFS documents for easy read-over.

The following text offers a Steiner perspective against these EYFS principles:

### EYFS principle: 1. A Unique Child

**'Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. The commitments are focused around development; inclusion; safety; and health and well-being'** (page 9 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS).

#### Steiner perspective:

*'We do not educate the child for the age of childhood, we educate him for his whole earthly existence.'*  
Rudolf Steiner. *The Roots of Education*, 17/04/1924

Steiner Waldorf early childhood education is based on a concept that everything that surrounds young children, both visible and invisible, has an impact on them. An understanding of human development underpins all Steiner practice, and practitioners relate human tendencies, stages of development and sensitive periods with Steiner developmental theory. It takes account of the whole child, including the spiritual and soul qualities, and believes that children's development and learning flourishes in a calm, peaceful, predictable, familiar and unhurried environment, which recognises the child's sensory sensitivities. In Steiner Waldorf settings, all the different activities, with their diverse but nurturing qualities, contribute to the gradual unfolding of the child's gifts, allowing them to become well balanced in physical, emotional and cognitive development. Practitioners allow children time to develop these capacities at their own pace within a well-structured and child-friendly environment.

Many items are made as gifts for family members and the home, and the graces of gratitude and thankfulness are practised through action and deed.

## EYFS principle: 2. Positive Relationships

**‘Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. The commitments are focused around respect; partnership with parents; supporting learning; and the role of the key persons’** (page 9 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS).

### Steiner perspective:

*‘There are three primary virtues which we must develop in the child: gratitude, love and responsibility. These three virtues are the foundation on which the whole social life is built’*

Rudolf Steiner. *Education of the Child*, 15/04/1923

The development of social skills and awareness of others are preconditions to formal learning, and prepare children for the behaviour that is required once children are in the classroom situation. Imitation is one of the most effective and natural means of learning at this age, and practitioners perform their tasks consciously and carefully, aware that they may be models worthy of imitation.

Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood settings (kindergartens) enable children to be in mixed-age family groupings, usually aged between three and six-plus years. The children are encouraged to share, to work together, to care for each other and to respect the needs of others. The behaviour of children is moulded by what surrounds them. Kindness is practised by practitioners and encouraged in the children and they learn to trust the adults around them. Traditional fairy tales and nature stories address the feeling realm and gradually awaken a fine moral sense for knowing right from wrong. The practitioner practises tolerance and patience and in cases of challenging behaviour, addresses the behaviour, not the child.

The practitioner (key worker) and other helpers work as a team, providing a family environment away from home. Strong connections are made and maintained with the child’s family/carers, and a bridge is built between home and school.

## EYFS principle: 3. Enabling Environments

**‘The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children’s development and learning. The commitments are focused around observation, assessment and planning; support for every child; the learning environment; and the wider context – transitions, continuity, and multi-agency working.’** (page 9 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS).

### Steiner perspective:

*‘In order to become true educators, the essential thing is to be able to see the truly aesthetic element in the work, to bring an artistic quality into our tasks, such as the creation of play materials.’*

Rudolf Steiner. *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*, 18/04/1923

In Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood settings, children are encouraged to appreciate the natural world in order to help them value its gifts and to understand its processes and the patterns of the seasons. The beauty of nature, plants, insects and animals is brought to the children with awe and wonder. The use of natural materials in play and craft fosters a connection with the natural world; the foundations of a respect for the environment and all it provides. Domestic tasks provide opportunities for elementary experiences of science and the four elements. When children make toys from sheep’s wool, wood, felt, cotton and other natural materials they learn about the origin of these materials.

Domestic activity needs proper tools, therefore knives, peelers, saws, hand drills and proper gardening tools are provided so that they can learn to use these tools in a safe and appropriate manner.

Children are encouraged to look after the kindergarten equipment, sanding and oiling wooden furniture and toys, mending things that break, washing clothes and doing other simple tasks, which children and adults can do together. Through organic gardening, recycling and in taking care of our immediate environment we create a basis to care for our world, others and ourselves.

## EYFS principle: 4. Learning and Development

**‘Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.’** (page 9 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS).

### Steiner perspective:

*‘To a healthy child, playing is not only a pleasurable pastime, but also an absolutely serious activity. Play flows in real earnest out of the child’s entire organism.’*

Rudolf Steiner. *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*, 18/04/1923

The Steiner early childhood approach is predicated upon the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cognitive development. Young children need to experience the relevance of their world before they separate themselves from it and begin to analyse it in a detached way. Learning gains meaning by its relevance to life and should not be separated from the business of daily living.

Cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills are accorded equal value and many different competencies are developed. Activities reflect the concerns, interests and developmental stages of the child and the carefully structured environment is designed to foster both personal and social learning. Both the intellectual and physical development of the child are allowed to unfold at their own pace and time, and everything provided within the setting underpins more formal learning which takes place at a later stage.

Teaching is by example rather than by direct instruction, and is integrated rather than subject-based. The Steiner Waldorf framework is adapted to the child. Children are encouraged to find their own learning situations in child-initiated free and creative play, in which, in particular, they develop positive social skills and empathy towards each other. The practitioners aid and facilitate the development of life skills over time that then become good habits, supporting the child’s learning. Children then become motivated and independent learners.

## Steiner perspective on each of the four EYFS principles and themes

The following table outlines the four EYFS themes and principles underpinning effective practice in the care, development and learning of young children. The themes are each broken down into four commitments describing how the principles can be put into practice, and the ‘EYFS Principles into Practice’ cards explain how practitioners can use these in their day-to-day work (EYFS Statutory Framework page 9). The EYFS accompanying poster gives a clear outline of these themes and principles.

In the following chart you will find the EYFS principles, followed by the Steiner perspective on each of the four themes and commitments underpinning the principles. For instance, the title (marked ‘1.1 Child Development’), in the column under ‘A Unique Child’, is taken from the EYFS poster. Below that is a clear description of how the Steiner approach puts these principles into practice.

**The EYFS themes, principles and commitments**  
 (EYFS Statutory Framework pages 8–9 and EYFS Principles into Practice cards)

<p><b>A Unique Child</b></p> <p>Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Child Development</li> <li>● Inclusive Practice</li> <li>● Keeping Safe</li> <li>● Health and Well-being</li> </ul>	<p><b>Positive Relationships</b></p> <p>Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Respecting Each Other</li> <li>● Parents as Partners</li> <li>● Supporting Learning</li> <li>● Key Person</li> </ul>	<p><b>Enabling Environments</b></p> <p>The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children’s development and learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Observation, Assessment and Planning</li> <li>● Supporting Every Child</li> <li>● The Learning Environment</li> <li>● The Wider Context</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning and Development</b></p> <p>Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interdependent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Play and Exploration</li> <li>● Active Learning</li> <li>● Creativity and Critical Thinking</li> <li>● Areas of Learning and Development</li> </ul>
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**The Steiner perspective on each of the commitments underpinning the above principles**

<p><b>1.1 Child Development</b></p> <p>The concept of human development underpins all Steiner practice.</p> <p>Steiner practitioners relate human tendencies, stages of development and sensitive periods with Steiner developmental theory. Each child is unique, and there is an understanding of respecting the child’s development – at their own pace and in their own time.</p> <p>Observation of the whole child (together with colleagues and parents) and child study are regarded as an integral part of understanding the development of each child.</p>	<p><b>2.1 Respecting Each Other</b></p> <p>Steiner early childhood practitioners work with their image of the child as a spiritual integrity bearing gifts, which slowly unfold as the child matures. The teachers’ role is to be conscious of their responsibility to provide a nurturing, joyful, warm and secure environment and to respect the wisdom of childhood and the child’s unique mode of experiencing and learning as the first step towards affirming their sense of self.</p>	<p><b>3.1 Observation, Assessment and Planning</b></p> <p>The environment is carefully planned for children to have the experiences necessary to develop holistically.</p> <p>Practitioner and colleagues plan, record and evaluate together for long-term as well as weekly and daily activities. Staff meet regularly to review their work and the children’s development. They attend Steiner Waldorf continuing professional development trainings, conferences or LA courses in order to keep abreast of the requirements for further training in areas such as new legislation, health and safety or child protection.</p>	<p><b>4.1 Play and Exploration</b></p> <p>Young children find their own learning situations through play, in which they develop good social skills and the foundations of empathy.</p> <p>Through play, children are able to exercise and consolidate their ability to understand and think and to develop and strengthen their concentration. Creative play supports physical, emotional and social development and allows children to learn through investigation, exploration and discovery. It encourages children to become creative, inventive and adaptable life-long learners.</p>
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<p><b>1.1 Child Development</b></p> <p>The environment is carefully provided to allow children to develop their skills in an age-appropriate way.</p> <p>Mixed ages in the group allow for children to learn from each other.</p>	<p><b>2.1 Respecting Each Other</b></p> <p>Imitation is one of the most effective and natural means of learning at this age and is modelled by practitioners who perform their tasks consciously and carefully, striving towards being role models worthy of imitation.</p> <p>Festivals (seasonal and religious) and occasions are part of the cycle of the year, and as such are celebrated together, sometimes with families, to recognise and respect the human being and the bounties of the world.</p> <p>Reverence and respect are part of daily life – for each other, our environment and ourselves.</p>	<p><b>3.1 Observation Assessment and Planning.</b></p> <p>Observation of the whole child is regarded as an integral part of understanding the development of each child.</p> <p>Detailed interviews, profiles and child studies serve as records of such observations. The practitioners make links using detailed and comprehensive observations of children and records of their activities, which inform whole-group planning and encourage individual learning.</p>	<p><b>4.1 Play and Exploration</b></p> <p>The physical space (both inside and outside) is designed to be home-like and as free from exterior distraction as possible. Toys are relatively undefined, to allow maximum scope for imaginative use and to enable investigation, exploration and discovery. The children are given opportunity for play arising out of their own observation of life, where they have the opportunity to integrate socially and use their imaginations and fantasy to recreate and work out situations which they have seen or experienced.</p>
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<p><b>1.2 Inclusive Practice</b></p> <p>The uniqueness of each child, family and community is valued and respected. The ethos of ‘children as unique human beings with their own important agenda in life’ and the principle of ‘learning through imitation and at their own rate’, focuses on the needs, potential and individual progress of each child, thereby underpinning inclusive practice in Steiner settings.</p> <p>Because resources are as simple as possible, they are infinitely flexible, so they can be something different for each child, no matter what their background or ability.</p> <p>Children who are disabled and those with special educational needs, travellers, or children with diverse linguistic backgrounds and others are welcomed into the kindergarten.</p> <p>Practitioners do their best to ensure that their knowledge and training in equal opportunities, anti-discriminatory practice and special educational needs are constantly updated. Self-reflection is practised on their own, and with colleagues.</p>	<p><b>2.2 Parents as Partners</b></p> <p>Parents are acknowledged as the child’s first educator, who with the practitioner forms a secure support for the child. Good relationships with parents are encouraged in order to support a smooth transition from home to the kindergarten, and from kindergarten to the home. The practitioner conducts regular home visits, and these help transition and develop relationships with the wider family.</p> <p>Workshops and parents’ evenings are provided to help develop parenting skills and to work with parents in support of their children’s development and learning in line with the Steiner ethos.</p> <p>Many settings offer parent and child groups to set this process in motion. Links are also created through a range of social and school-based activities.</p> <p>Parents are welcomed to participate in festivals and occasions throughout the year.</p>	<p><b>3.2 Supporting Every Child</b></p> <p>Although planning normally relates to the experience of the whole group and embraces the six areas of learning, the needs of individuals are very carefully considered and addressed.</p> <p>Children with identified learning problems have their own Individual Education Plan (IEP), which details strategies, resources and parental contribution necessary fully to integrate them into the group.</p> <p>All children are welcomed into the group and supported by the teacher and each other, forming a unified approach to their learning and development regardless of their specific needs.</p> <p>This unified approach means ‘we’ become a community, a ‘family’ and as such support each other.</p>	<p><b>4.2 Active Learning</b></p> <p>Children interact spontaneously with their gently stimulating environment and develop through practical skills and sensory experiences with real objects. These activities form the foundation for all future learning and the basis of learning through exploration. Movement is an integral part of the learning process in Steiner kindergartens.</p> <p>The kindergarten is a community of ‘doers’ and through ‘work’ the young child learns not only social and domestic skills, but is able to develop good motor and practical skills. Children ‘think’ with their entire physical being, learn through doing and experiencing, and ‘grasp’ the world through experiential and self-motivated physical activity. They learn from life, for life.</p> <p>As the adults are active and purposeful in the domestic tasks, the children imitate their focus, whether in activities or through their play.</p> <p>For further information about learning please see Section 3.</p>
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<p><b>1.3 Keeping Safe</b></p> <p>Children are vulnerable and need to be protected by adults. All Steiner providers comply with regulation regarding safeguarding children and ensuring that the appropriate risk assessment strategy is in place. Allowing children to find their own limits and boundaries with regard to physical movement within a safe environment and with supportive and observant adults lets them develop a healthy relationship to their own bodies, and an understanding of their capabilities and their special awareness.</p> <p>Many tasks undertaken during the daily work in the kindergarten need proper tools. Knives and peelers for preparing vegetables or fruit, saws, hand drills and hammers for woodwork, and garden tools are provided. In the outdoors, children can be involved in tree climbing, running and large-scale building to stretch their physical capabilities. (Children are taught the proper care and use of these.)</p>	<p><b>2.3 Supporting Learning</b></p> <p>Steiner practitioners identify rhythm and repetition as important educational principles. Regular patterns of activity create routine and foster a sense of security and self-confidence, as well as a sense of place and time.</p> <p>Practitioners create a breathing rhythm of contraction and expansion between activity and stillness.</p> <p>A Steiner setting is a place of ‘doers’, and through ‘work’ young children learn not only social skills but develop good motor and practical skills. They ‘think’ with their entire physical being, experiencing and grasping the world through experiential and self-motivated activity.</p> <p>Imitation is an effective means of learning and can be most easily directed when the adults perform their tasks consciously and carefully, repeating the gestures of each action in a rhythmical and natural way without needing conscious instruction. The children imitate the activity of the teacher. Children can do quite complex tasks if they see them regularly performed with love and care.</p>	<p><b>3.3 The Learning Environment</b></p> <p>The Steiner early childhood framework is based on the idea that all the senses of the very young child are very impressionable and vulnerable to over-stimulation. Very careful consideration is therefore given to the detail of the quality of all the aspects of the environment, both indoors and outdoors. The indoor space is designed to be home-like, comfortable and gently stimulating, with simple but beautiful and natural materials to support imaginative play and creative independence.</p> <p>Wherever possible the setting will provide outdoor space for plenty of movement, gardening, playful explorations and expeditions.</p>	<p><b>4.3 Creativity and Critical Thinking</b></p> <p>Physical activity is very young children’s mode of ‘thinking’. They grasp reality through direct physical experience. In play, by imitating the adult world, they practise all the necessary life skills of social, emotional and cognitive nature. As all their doing is imbued with imagination, it allows children to operate freely, outside the realms of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. This leads to self-confidence and freedom in thinking, which are necessary in problem solving throughout life.</p> <p>Artistic creativity can be seen in their play (puppet shows, storytelling and plays), with seasonal craft activities undertaken (felted, lantern making), music and movement (ring time and eurythmy) and many others such as painting, drawing, modelling, etc.</p>
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<p><b>1.4 Health and Well-being</b></p> <p>All Steiner practitioners recognise that children’s physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs must be met if they are to develop their full potential.</p> <p>The rhythm of the day, which includes time spent outdoors, allows a healthy regard for physical development.</p> <p>Organic food is grown or supplied where possible, and children prepare, serve and eat nutritious meals together.</p> <p>Together and through imitating the adults, the children take responsibility for each other, themselves and the environment.</p>	<p><b>2.4 Key Person</b></p> <p>In a Steiner Early Childhood setting the practitioner is the key person for each individual child, gently supported by early childhood assistants or students. The practitioner is in loco parentis, providing a ‘home away from home’.</p> <p>The practitioner encourages independent activity and development through the child’s self-initiated action and play and daily domestic and artistic activities. Their role is to be conscious of their responsibility to respect the wisdom of childhood and the child’s unique mode of experiencing and learning as the first step towards affirming their sense of self, while being a role model worthy of imitation by the child.</p> <p>The child’s development, progress and achievements and difficulties are shared with the parents.</p>	<p><b>3.4 The Wider Context</b></p> <p>A variety of different adults from the local community regularly support Steiner early childhood teachers by sharing their expertise with the children.</p> <p>The celebration of festivals provides experiences of different cultures world-wide, and young children learn songs and rhymes in many languages as part of regular activity. The community is often involved in these festivals.</p> <p>Responsibility and care of the environment is practised on a daily basis, for example with recycling and composting, and through domestic activities such as washing, polishing and mending.</p> <p>Practitioners work in partnership with other settings and professionals who help support children with particular and individual needs.</p>	<p><b>4.4 Areas of Learning and Development</b></p> <p>The EYFS is made up of six areas of Learning and Development. All these areas are connected to one another and are equally important</p> <p>See Section 3 for information linking the EYFS six areas of learning with the Steiner early childhood curriculum.</p>
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## Section 2



### EYFS: Learning and Development requirements

#### Overview of the EYFS Learning and Development requirements

The Childcare Act 2006 requires that the EYFS ‘learning and development requirements must be delivered by all early years providers, regardless of type, size or funding of the setting’. The learning and development requirements are set out in Section 2 of the Statutory Framework for the EYFS (page 11). The *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* and supporting resources provide information and advice designed to help practitioners meet these legal requirements in a way which reflects the needs of the individual children in their care and is appropriate to their setting.

**‘Children are competent learners from birth and develop and learn in a wide variety of ways. All practitioners should, therefore, look carefully at the children in their care, consider their needs, their interests, and their stages of development and use all of this information to help plan a challenging and enjoyable experience across all the areas of Learning and Development’.**  
(page 11 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS).

The EYFS Learning and Development requirements comprise three elements:

- the early learning goals – the knowledge, skills and understanding which young children should have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of five;
- the educational programmes – the matters, skills and processes which are required to be taught to young children;
- the assessment arrangements – the arrangements for assessing young children to ascertain their achievements.

There are six areas covered by the early learning goals and educational programmes:

- Personal, Social, and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language and Literacy
- Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development

**‘None of these areas of Learning and Development can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to child development. All the areas must be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.’** (page 11 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS).

## The Steiner perspective on the EYFS Learning and Development requirements

*‘We must not think out work for children to do, even in play, that is not an imitation of life itself’.*  
Rudolf Steiner. *The Kingdom of Childhood*, 1924

Steiner believed that children’s learning is intrinsically linked with his view of child development and that it is detrimental if inappropriate learning challenges are presented before a child is developmentally ready. Although in Steiner philosophy, the stages of development evolve roughly within seven-year cycles, this readiness will vary from child to child. As children unfold in an appropriately stimulating environment, supported by sensitive and knowledgeable adults, they will learn to fulfil their innate potential and bring forth their individual gifts.

## Key Steiner pedagogical principles

### The whole child

Steiner early childhood practitioners understand that the faculties of physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cognitive development need to be integrated in every human being. Young children need to experience the relevance of their world before they separate themselves from it and begin to analyse it in a detached way. Learning gains meaning by its relevance to life and should not be separated from the business of daily living. The learning experience of children under the age of seven therefore is integrated and not subject-based. Mathematics and use of mathematical language and concepts such as addition and subtraction (or more or less), weight, measure, quantity and shape are grasped in a practical manner as part of daily life. Children may tell stories by ‘reading’ the pictures in a book, which develops verbal skills, frees the narrative from the printed text and encourages children to use their own words. Many children also act out or perform puppet shows and develop dramatic skills through working with narrative and dialogue. The conversations around the meal table and during ring time (songs, finger games, movement games, etc. for the whole class) give the children the opportunity to become familiar with listening and speaking, rhyming and riddles. Painting and drawing help with balance, symmetry and dexterity.

The integration of these activities cultivates a love of language, develops speech and allows children time to become really familiar with the spoken word – the best preparation and foundation for the subsequent development of literacy.

### The environment

*‘What a difference there is between...playthings that leave as much as possible to the power of imagination and giving finished toys that leave nothing for the child’s own inner activity.’*  
Rudolf Steiner. *The Roots of Education*, 17/04/1998

### The indoor space

The Steiner early childhood approach is based on an understanding that the senses of the young child are sensitively impressionable and that *everything* that surrounds children has a direct or subtle

impact on them. Very careful consideration is therefore given to the detail of the quality of all aspects of the setting's environment to ensure that it is gentle to the eye, ear and all the senses. The physical space is designed to be home-like in the way it is set up, and as free from exterior distraction as possible. The scale of the space should not overwhelm a small child and so where possible the ceiling is low, there are no 'hard' corners and it is decorated in soft tones of pink to create a gentle, secure feeling. Each child has his/her own coat peg with their name or a picture above it and somewhere to leave a change of shoes. There is a nature table which follows a seasonal theme and the decorations are also seasonal, always displayed with moderation, using soft material and pastel colours. There is a quiet corner, a home corner, an area for floor play and building large constructions, an area for activity and snack tables and chairs. The kitchen area is partitioned but usually within the room.

## Materials and toys

The furniture is made of wood and is intended for multiple use. Toys are made of natural materials and are deliberately crafted to be relatively undefined which allows maximum scope for imaginative use as props in children's play. They include wooden blocks, planks and logs, natural plain cloth, shells, cones, and hand-made dolls. Equipment includes grain mills, juice presses, woodwork tools, spinning wheels and other simple manual tools, watercolours, broad brushes, beeswax crayons, sheep's fleece, sewing materials and specially designed picture books. There is also a variety of materials in soft colours for dressing up or using to cover the wooden screens, which can make houses, boats or castles. In the home corner there are small cradles, prams, table and chairs, kitchen equipment and more such domestic items. There are often instruments for musical activities, and sometimes a quiet/book corner with a few carefully chosen picture books which are changed regularly.

## The outdoor space

The kindergarten setting will have a protected and safe outdoor area for play and work where the children can climb trees, hide in bushes or play in the sand or mud pit. The outdoor equipment is simple, with a choice of skipping ropes, digging or raking equipment, and logs and branches for building dens. Where outdoor space is limited, children are taken to the local park, playground or wherever they can experience nature. Where possible, children are introduced to gardening/composting in the kindergarten garden where there is an opportunity to become familiar with the process of growing from planting to harvesting.

## Play is a young child's work

Young children find their own learning situations in play. Studies demonstrate that good players show more empathy towards others, develop good social skills and are less aggressive. They are able to see things from the perspective of the other and show less signs of fear, sadness and fatigue. Play also strengthens the imagination, which is an essential aspect of cognitive development.

Creative play supports physical, emotional and social development and allows children to learn through investigation, exploration and discovery. It encourages children to become inventive and adaptable. Children are able to exercise and consolidate their ability to understand and to think through their play and take initiative. In addition it develops and strengthens concentration. Studies show that children who score highest in socio-dramatic play also demonstrate the greatest gains in a number of cognitive areas such as intellectual competence, longer attention span, and more innovative and creative thinking. In the kindergarten the children are given opportunity for child-initiated free play (both inside and outside) – play arising out of the child's own observation of life. Such play provides opportunity to integrate socially and to use imagination and fantasy to recreate and work out situations which children have seen or experienced. There is no adult interference in setting up the play, as the adults are involved in their own 'work' but are able to observe and help and guide where necessary.

## ‘Doing’ is learning

A kindergarten is a community of ‘doers’ and through ‘work’ the young child learns not only social and domestic skills, but is able to develop good motor and practical skills. Children ‘think’ with their entire physical being, learn through doing and experiencing and ‘grasp’ the world through experiential and self-motivated physical activity. Also, the will is developed through doing activities when children are young and such activity brings long-term benefits to learning later on. Young children learn for life from life.

## Rhythm and repetition are crucial

Regular patterns of activities create routine and foster a sense of security and self-confidence and help the child to know what to expect. Working with rhythm helps children to live with change, to find their place in the world, and to begin to understand the past, present and future. It provides a very real foundation for the understanding of time – what has gone before and what will follow – and helps children to relate to the natural and the human world. Children’s memories are strengthened by recurring experiences: daily, weekly and yearly events in kindergarten (such as festivals and celebrations) are remembered and often eagerly anticipated a second time around.

Repetition helps to support good habits. So in a Steiner kindergarten emphasis is given to regular patterns of activities repeated within the day, week and year to provide rhythm and routine. Each day has its own rhythms, which support the day’s activities. Stories, songs, verses and craft activities relate to the season and a ‘seasonal area’ in the room reflects the changing natural world throughout the year, as do the themes of the songs, stories and poems.

## The role of ‘mood’

The kindergarten day has different ‘moods’. These provide opportunity for children to learn that there is an expectation to adjust behaviour in different situations. The creating of different moods to accompany different kinds of activities is done very deliberately as a way of allowing children to become aware of the invisible boundaries that determine what kind of behaviour is appropriate for the situation. For example, there are moments of reverence each day when the children associate the mood with stillness, awe and wonder. The mood at mealtime, on the other hand, is more sociable and is associated with being aware of others – ensuring that everyone has a share of the food and listening to another child’s ‘news’. Seasonal or culturally relevant festivals provide the opportunity to create a special joyful and celebratory mood. They usually involve other members of the families. Birthdays are important events, where the parents provide the ‘birthday story’ based on the child’s own life, told at a special birthday ceremony to which families are sometimes invited. At all times the teacher will aim to integrate other assistants, parents and visitors into the rhythm of the morning without disrupting the carefully prepared ‘mood’ of the kindergarten.



## The Steiner practitioner

Steiner early childhood practitioners undertake a rigorous formal training in Steiner early childhood pedagogy. The Steiner qualifications are listed on the Children's Workforce Development Council qualifications list as recognised qualifications.

The training includes the pedagogical philosophy and the approach to child development that underpins Steiner early childhood education, and includes the pivotal role of child observation for assessing and monitoring each child's development. Practitioners are trained to be conscious of their own moral influence upon the child and that young children perceive and imitate everything the adults do – it is not only what one does before the young child but also how one does it. How one handles tools and materials, relationships with colleagues and parents, and even thoughts, feelings, gestures and body language: these are all registered and internalised by the child. The practitioners are also trained to encourage independent activity and development through the child's self-initiated action/play and to hold the group together through a quiet, calm presence.

## The teaching method

Steiner practitioners work with their image of the child as a spiritual being bearing gifts, and it is their task, alongside the parents, to help the child to unwrap these gifts as the child develops. The practitioners' role is to be conscious of their responsibility to provide a nurturing, warm and secure environment and to respect the wisdom of childhood and the child's unique mode of experiencing and learning as the first step towards affirming the sense of self. There is no deliberate effort to 'teach' or 'instruct' the children in any formal sense. Imitation is one of the most effective and natural means of learning at this age and can be most easily directed when the adults perform their tasks consciously and carefully, repeating the gestures of each action in a rhythmical and natural way.

The children imitate the conscious activity of the adult. To see an adult at work, perhaps in the activity of carving a spoon in which care, skill, concentration and perseverance are all demanded, is a wonderful example to the ever-watchful child – a lesson in the sustained application of willpower. Children can learn to do quite complex practical tasks, even involving sharp or awkward tools or equipment, if they see them regularly performed with love and care.

Practitioners therefore carry out their daily tasks in such a way as to be worthy of imitation, and remain vigilant that they are providing a role model and example at all times. The teacher who sets the example may then have certain expectations of the children.

A happy, smooth transition from home to school relies on the practitioner's good relationship with parents/carers. Their role includes home visits and parents' evenings. Lectures, study groups, workshops and informal parent or teacher-led sessions also provide a forum for understanding more about the Steiner approach to young children and what can be done at home to support the work in the kindergartens. Links are made through festivals and a range of social and school-based events and activities.

## Section 3



### Examples of how the Learning and Development requirements are experienced in Steiner settings

The following tables should serve as a guide and an overview of the kind of activities children experience in a Steiner Early Childhood setting and which might help them develop towards maturity in line with most of the EYFS Learning and Development requirements. This process is usually planned for within long-term and short-term planning, and documented in the child's educational profile as well as IEPs produced where needed. Each kindergarten session is a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities.

It is important to note that although practitioners work with and out of deep and important principles, they do not set up any learning situations for specific and isolated learning goals, e.g. a specific game in order to learn to add on one or more. Instead, the routinely occurring domestic activity of setting the table ensures that children learn this mathematical concept through discovery and repetition, thus making the learning process holistic, emotionally supportive and above all purposeful to the young child.

The practitioners observe children constantly and note any possible problems as well as successes. They attempt to meet the individual learning needs of a child by addressing the whole group where possible, e.g. addressing certain speech problems by specific rhymes and songs in ring time.

### Personal, Social and Emotional Development

From the EYFS educational programme (page 12 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS)

***Children must be provided with experiences and support which will help them to develop a positive sense of themselves and of others; respect for others; social skills; and a positive disposition to learn. Providers must ensure support for children's emotional well-being to help them to know themselves and what they can do.***

#### Steiner perspective:

The development of social skills and awareness of others is a precursor to formal learning and prepares children for the level of behaviour that is required once they are in the classroom situation. In a Steiner Early Childhood setting children are encouraged to share, to work together, to care for each other and to respect the needs of others. The behaviour of children is moulded by what surrounds them. Kindness is practised by practitioners and encouraged in the children and they learn to trust the adults around them. Many items are made as gifts for family members. Traditional fairy tales and nature stories address the feeling realm and gradually awaken a fine moral sense for knowing right from wrong.

Early learning goals as identified in the EYFS Statutory Framework (page 12)	Examples of Steiner practice
<b>By the end of the EYFS most children are expected to:</b>	<b>In Steiner early settings, children at an age-appropriate level:</b>
Continue to be interested, excited and motivated to learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are helped to settle into the setting and the routines.</li> <li>● Help themselves to play materials.</li> <li>● Play freely and creatively.</li> <li>● Imitate gestures and movements during teacher-led activities.</li> </ul>
Be confident to try new activities, initiate ideas and speak in a familiar group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Select activities spontaneously.</li> <li>● Are curious about new activities being undertaken by older peers and being modelled by teachers and are ready to try them.</li> <li>● Contribute to discussions with teachers and other children around the snack table or during work activities.</li> <li>● Develop social interaction and ideas in play.</li> </ul>
Maintain attention, concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Concentrate when working on a self-chosen activity.</li> <li>● Are involved and take turns when working within a group.</li> <li>● Are able to listen to a story or puppet show.</li> <li>● Imitate the practitioner during guided group activities such as ring time or snack.</li> </ul>
Respond to significant experiences, showing a range of feelings when appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are recognised to be responding to their experiences.</li> <li>● Express their needs and feelings appropriately.</li> </ul>
Have a developing awareness of their own needs, views and feelings, and be sensitive to the needs, views and feelings of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Begin to help other and younger children in the group.</li> <li>● Listen to others and respond appropriately.</li> </ul>
Have a developing respect for their own culture and beliefs and those of other people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participate in the celebration of religious and cultural festivals with interest and respect.</li> <li>● Participate in the celebration of birthdays.</li> <li>● Sit and eat in a well-mannered way at the snack table.</li> </ul>
Form good relationships with adults and peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are able to settle well in the kindergarten.</li> <li>● Are able to share ideas, food, toys and materials with peers and adults in the setting.</li> <li>● Show politeness and consideration for friends, peers and adults.</li> <li>● Respond appropriately to practitioner and other adults.</li> </ul>



<p>Work as part of a group or a class, taking turns and sharing fairly, understanding that there needs to be agreed values and codes of behaviour for groups of people, including adults and children, to work together harmoniously.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are able gradually to accept the principles of sharing and caring for the classroom so that everyone can use it freely.</li> <li>• Are aware of and respond appropriately to the particular need of children who are learning English as an additional language, and to those with special needs.</li> </ul>
<p>Understand what is right, what is wrong, and why.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are able to follow the expected code of behaviour instilled through steady rhythm and routine and out of imitation of the adult.</li> </ul>
<p>Consider the consequences of their words and actions for themselves and others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are no longer overwhelmed by sense impressions.</li> <li>• Develop a listening and empathetic disposition.</li> </ul>
<p>Dress and undress independently and manage their personal hygiene.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a growing ability to put on a coat to go outside or to go home, to use the toilet unaided and wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating a snack or lunch.</li> <li>• Know and manage personal hygiene, for example cleaning their teeth and brushing their hair.</li> </ul>
<p>Select and use activities and resources independently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build play houses and other enclosures with minimum aid.</li> <li>• Utilise spontaneously all the materials on offer for free creative play.</li> <li>• Offer to help with domestic activities inside or outside, including tidying up.</li> </ul>
<p>Understand that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs that need to be treated with respect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join in with ring time and other group activities.</li> <li>• Tidy up when it is required.</li> <li>• Enjoy festivals and celebrations and involvement with families and friends.</li> </ul>
<p>Understand that they can expect others to treat their needs, views, cultures and beliefs with respect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interact with adults who are good role models.</li> <li>• Show respect for each others' needs, play and creations .</li> <li>• Show general respect, kindness and polite behaviour towards each other and adults.</li> <li>• Develop a listening disposition.</li> </ul>



## Communication, Language and Literacy

From the EYFS educational programme (page 13 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS)

***Children’s learning and competence in communicating, speaking and listening, being read to and beginning to read and write must be supported and extended. They must be provided with opportunity and encouragement to use their skills in a range of situations and for a range of purposes, and be supported in developing the confidence and disposition to do so.***

### Steiner perspective:

There are areas of the educational programmes which may not be met in a Steiner kindergarten (as detailed below) particularly ‘being read to and beginning to read and write must be supported and extended’. In this specific area, most kindergartens are applying for exemptions or modifications to those early learning goals which they feel may not be met.

### Literacy

In the area of Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL) children are not formally taught letter formation, sound–grapheme correspondence, word building or reading strategies. Instead, as detailed in the following section, there are many activities which foster extended language skills, phonological awareness, fine motor skills, movement/balance skills, sequencing and visual discrimination skills, as well as in most cases respectful book handling skills.

It is expected that cognitive development is supported by the use of language, and therefore speech development and physical coordination must come before writing and reading. Certain parts of the kindergarten day are carefully designed to develop these crucial foundations for when formal literacy skills are introduced when they enter Class 1 in a Steiner school (age six-plus).

### Speech

The evidence of the importance that the Steiner curriculum attaches to the spoken word is clear in the way the day is structured. Good communication and oral numerical skills develop out of playing and working together in an informal and practical atmosphere. Every day the children take part in activities such as counting games, rhythmic activities, poetry, rhymes and singing, including material in foreign languages. The oral tradition is integrated into most parts of the kindergarten day to encourage listening and speech development. They listen to stories told by the teacher, which include a rich vocabulary. Children experience the musicality of language and its social aspects through playing ring games and eurythmy. The latter is a form of movement which works with language and music.

Children are encouraged to speak freely and learn to listen to others. Use of language enables cognitive development, and well-chosen words and good syntax support clear thinking. The development of a good memory and recall are reliant on the spoken word, rather than the printed word or computers, and speech develops concentration and empathy, which are essential for formal learning.

Through rhyming games as well as games like ‘I Spy’ children develop some phonological awareness, which will further be developed in Class 1 of the main school.

Early learning goals as identified in the EYFS Statutory Framework (page 13)	Examples of Steiner practice
<b>By the end of the EYFS most children are expected to:</b>	<b>In Steiner Early Childhood settings, children at an age-appropriate level:</b>
Interact with others, negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Speak freely and listen to each other during activities.</li> <li>● Share ideas and experiences during creative play, domestic and creative work, as well as at the snack table.</li> <li>● Take part in counting games, rhymes and riddles, and other forms of group interaction.</li> </ul>
Enjoy listening to and using spoken and written language, and readily turn to it in their play and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen to a told story or puppet show.</li> <li>● Make up their own puppet shows and stories.</li> <li>● Dress up and pretend in creative play, perhaps stimulated by heard stories or personal experiences.</li> <li>● Make emergent writing marks on drawings or create props for their creative play (e.g. train tickets).</li> <li>● Take part in rhymes, songs and poems shared in different languages.</li> </ul>
Sustain attentive listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions or actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen attentively at story time and during group activities.</li> <li>● Listen to the practitioner's comments and respond appropriately, (e.g. at snack table, tidying time, etc.).</li> <li>● Participate in 'I Spy' and other group games.</li> <li>● Talk about their play with peers or adults.</li> <li>● Talk about the domestic activities and observations in the classroom.</li> <li>● Interact appropriately with their peers in conversation or actions.</li> </ul>
Listen with enjoyment, and respond to stories, songs and other music, rhymes and poems and make up their own stories, songs, rhymes and poems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enjoy listening to traditional fairy stories, nature or folk tales, told true to cultural heritage and delivered in the same way many times consecutively.</li> <li>● Enjoy and participate in traditional songs and rhymes during 'ring time', accompanied by rhythmical and routinely performed gestures by imitation of the practitioner.</li> <li>● Recreate these songs, rhymes and stories as part of their creative play or in puppet shows or theatre.</li> </ul>
Extend their vocabulary, exploring the meanings and sounds of new words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hear stories, rhymes and songs with rich vocabulary, repeated regularly as part of the curriculum and delivered by human voice and in the beautiful rhythm of language, sometimes in foreign languages.</li> <li>● Extend their vocabulary by playing with words, in rhymes, riddles or games.</li> <li>● Imitate adult language of domestic work, e.g. naming tools and work processes correctly.</li> </ul>

<p>Speak clearly and audibly with confidence and control, and show awareness of the listener.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have opportunities throughout each session to express their needs and feelings.</li> <li>● Imitate the polite manner of speaking modelled by the adults in the setting.</li> <li>● Interact and negotiate with peers during free creative play.</li> </ul>
<p>Use language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create their own imaginative worlds of the home, work or adventure during creative play in or outdoors, using simple props and beautiful natural objects. e.g. a boat made from chairs and planks, a sail from a drape or oars from branches found in the garden.</li> </ul>
<p>Use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Imitate language in their own self-initiated and imaginative play.</li> <li>● Cooperate with peers and practitioners in group play or activities, narrating their activities and communicating their perceptions, ideas and feelings.</li> </ul>
<p>Hear and say sounds in words in the order in which they occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Imitate clear adult speech, poems, rhymes and sounds by imitation of the practitioner.</li> <li>● Play an 'I Spy' game or similar, fostering phonological awareness of beginning and end syllables or phonemes.</li> </ul>
<p>Link sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are not formally taught any phoneme-grapheme correspondence, linking, naming or sounding letters.</li> <li>● Sometimes recognise their own names, or letters connected with their names on drawings or pegs.</li> </ul>
<p>Use their phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In most cases are not formally taught any letter or word formation.</li> </ul>
<p>Explore and experiment with sounds, words, and text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Might spontaneously play with words, as in 'silly rhyming', i.e. changing word parts, e.g. 'horsy – borsy' or names 'Peter – Meter'.</li> <li>● Use emergent writing in many play activities, e.g. write pretend letters, birthday cards, make 'tickets' for a show.</li> <li>● Write their name, through imitating the practitioner or their own family.</li> <li>● In most cases are not taught formally to explore or blend sounds, read or write.</li> </ul>
<p>Retell narratives in the correct sequence, drawing on the language patterns of stories.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recreate puppet shows imbued with their own imagination or from memory of stories told.</li> <li>● Draw on stories they have heard when playing creatively indoors or out.</li> <li>● Develop their aural memory.</li> </ul>

<p>Read a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences independently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pretend to read their own emergent writing.</li> <li>● Read their own or others' names.</li> <li>● In most cases children are not surrounded by written text or taught how to read.</li> </ul>
<p>Know that print carries meaning and, in English, is read from left to right and top to bottom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sometimes look at and 'read the pictures' by telling the stories in the book, handling them carefully and with respect, drawing on knowledge of the story as well as picture clues.</li> <li>● In most cases children are not read to, as the oral tradition of story telling is fostered instead.</li> </ul>
<p>Show understanding of elements of stories, such as main character, sequence of events and openings, and how information can be found in non-fiction texts to answer questions about where, who, why and how.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Begin to create their own puppet shows.</li> <li>● Create story lines in their play, e.g. going on a journey, building a house, playing pirates and digging for treasure.</li> <li>● In most cases children are not given books in which to find information.</li> </ul>
<p>Attempt writing for different purposes, using features of different forms such as lists, stories and instructions.</p> <p>Write their own names and other things such as labels and captions, and begin to form simple sentences, sometimes using punctuation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use emergent writing in their creative play, e.g. messages, open signs, etc.</li> <li>● Make play props such as tickets or lists.</li> <li>● May write their own name out of imitation.</li> <li>● Use emergent writing and mark-making of their own style.</li> <li>● Are not formally taught how to write. However, children may imitate adults' writing.</li> </ul>
<p>Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use paint brushes for painting.</li> <li>● Use crayons for drawing or emergent writing.</li> <li>● Are not formally taught how to form letters.</li> </ul>



## Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

From the EYFS educational programme (page 14 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS)

*Children must be supported in developing their understanding of Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy in a broad range of contexts in which they can explore, enjoy, learn, practise and talk about their developing understanding. They must be provided with opportunities to practise and extend their skills in these areas and to gain confidence and competence in their use.*

### Steiner perspective:

Mathematical concepts and language are integrated into the daily routine, on the grounds that grasping mathematical concepts such as weight, measure and shape is most meaningful when it relates to everyday activities and routines. For example, the preparation of food provides an opportunity to weigh, measure, count and possibly recognise numbers on scales; and setting the table is another area where mathematics is used in a practical way. Through songs and movement games, children recognise and recreate patterns – in, out, alternate, in front of, behind – and they do many finger games and nursery rhymes, which in some cases, include addition and subtraction. Natural objects such as acorns, pinecones, conkers and shells are sorted, ordered and counted, as part of spontaneous play or tidy. This approach to the introduction of mathematics embeds the concepts in a social and moral context. Children are not taught any number recognition or formation, formal number operations, or set any formal activities to foster oral number skills. In some kindergartens, exemptions or modifications may be applied for in the areas referred to below.

Early learning goals as identified in the EYFS Statutory Framework (page 14)	Examples of Steiner practice
<b>By the end of the EYFS most children are expected to:</b>	<b>In Steiner Early Childhood settings, children at an age appropriate level:</b>
Say and use number names in order in familiar contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Join in number rhymes and songs.</li> <li>May count, for example, the number of children present, days of the week, spoons or ingredients when cooking.</li> </ul>
Count reliably up to ten everyday objects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Count during play, tidying up or domestic activities.</li> </ul>
Recognise numerals 1 to 9.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May write numerals as emergent writing.</li> <li>Are not formally taught number recognition.</li> </ul>
Use developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May count and calculate, solve logistical problems during play, i.e. constructing a bridge with different sized wooden blocks.</li> </ul>
In practical activities and discussions, begin to use the vocabulary involved in adding and subtracting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May count, add, use 'more/less/fewer' during activities such as baking, tidying, laying the table or creative play.</li> </ul>
Use language such as 'more' or 'less' to compare two numbers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May count, add, use 'more/less/fewer' during activities such as tidying, laying the table or creative play.</li> </ul>

<p>Find one more or one less than a number from one to ten.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May find 'more' or 'less' in playing with number rhymes or during play or activities.</li> <li>• May count, add, use 'more/less/fewer' during activities such as baking, tidying, laying the table or creative play.</li> </ul>
<p>Begin to relate addition to combining two groups of objects and subtraction to 'taking away'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May count, add, use 'more/less/fewer' during activities such as tidying, laying the table, creative play or finger games.</li> <li>• May use the vocabulary 'add' or 'subtract' as it comes up in day-to-day conversation about the activities that are taking place.</li> </ul>
<p>Use language such as 'greater', 'smaller', 'heavier', or 'lighter' to compare quantities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May use this language to weigh and measure during domestic/craft activities, e.g. flour during baking, thread during sewing or wood during woodwork.</li> </ul>
<p>Use language such as 'circle' or 'bigger' to describe the shape and size of solids and flat shapes.  Use everyday words to describe position.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use this language during all forms of creative play indoors or out, also in sharing and ordering equipment and toys.</li> <li>• Use vocabulary in cooking and food preparation, e.g. sliced carrots make circles.</li> <li>• Use predominantly unregulated, i.e. natural shapes of wood, which are more difficult to balance and manipulate, therefore are challenging to the senses and cognitive faculties.</li> <li>• Learn these concepts (behind, under, through, etc.) during play, movement games, ring time and eurythmy.</li> </ul>
<p>Use developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use these during all forms of creative play indoors or out.</li> <li>• Set the table counting children and adults and organising cutlery, crockery and chairs.</li> </ul>
<p>Talk about, recognise and recreate simple patterns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paint, draw, sew, build etc, sometimes creating patterns spontaneously and talking about them, particularly in floor play, e.g. arranging blocks, shells or stones in patterns.</li> </ul>

## Knowledge and Understanding of the World

From the EYFS educational programme (page 14 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS)

**Children must be supported in developing the knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world. Their learning must be supported through offering opportunities for them to use a range of tools safely; encounter creatures, people, plants and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations; undertake practical 'experiments'; and work with a range of materials.**

### Steiner perspective:

Children are encouraged to appreciate the natural world in order to help them to value its gifts and to understand its processes and the patterns of the seasons. The beauty of nature, plants, insects and animals is brought to the children with awe and wonder. Domestic tasks provide opportunities for elementary experiences of science and the four elements. When children make toys from sheep's wool, wood, felt, cotton and other natural materials they learn about their origin and uses. Local craftspeople are often invited to visit the setting; local walks provide an opportunity for the children to appreciate some of nature's wonders. Children are encouraged to look after the kindergarten equipment, sanding and oiling wooden furniture and toys, mending things that break, washing cloths and other simple tasks which children and adults can do together.

Children are not exposed to any form of programmable toys or electronic technology, such as TV or computers. Instead, as detailed in the section below, children use a wide range of ‘warm technology’, such as hand-manipulated machines and tools, e.g. corn grinders, drills and whisks. Children also see, in most cases, ovens and hot plates used for cooking, and are aware of light switches, traffic lights and so on, as a normal part of everyday life. Warm technology as referred to above, supports both physical development and development of the will, thus enabling them to experience the true function of the machine, namely the extended action of the human body. It is in line with the idea that physical action is child thinking, supporting important cognitive development as well as physical skills in an age-appropriate way.

Early learning goals as identified in the EYFS Statutory Framework (pages 14–15)	Examples of Steiner practice
<b>By the end of the EYFS most children are expected to:</b>	<b>In Steiner Early Childhood settings, children at an age-appropriate level:</b>
Investigate objects and materials by using all of their senses as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help themselves to freely available natural materials, e.g. wood, wool, cotton, stone, shells etc., for the purpose of free creative play or activities. These appropriately stimulate all the senses without over-stimulating the children.</li> <li>● Play and work in a busy, interesting but calm environment filled with beautiful and appealing objects, which are incorporated and constantly adapted within imaginative play.</li> </ul>
Find out about, and identify, some features of living things, objects and events they observe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Play outdoors where they explore the natural world in every kind of weather.</li> <li>● Garden and grow vegetables and fruit.</li> <li>● Have expeditions into the woods, park, field or visit centre.</li> <li>● Explore and investigate living creatures, animals and insects in their environment, and respond to them with awe and wonder.</li> </ul>
Look closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Garden regularly, plant, tend and harvest, e.g. beans, which are used to plant again and again to show the life cycle.</li> <li>● Participate in seasonal activities throughout the year.</li> <li>● Celebrate festivals, which pertain to nature, e.g. harvest, spring, Advent etc.</li> </ul>
Ask questions about why things happen and how things work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have opportunities for asking questions relating to all the activities going on in the setting. The practitioner endeavours to find ways of letting the children find their own answers where possible, which may well be imbued with imagination.</li> </ul>
Build and construct with a wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources, and adapting their work where necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Construct dens and houses, build boats and towers etc. using planks, bricks, furniture, drapes, as well as an array of natural materials available in the setting or in nature.</li> </ul>
Select the tools and techniques they need to shape, assemble and join materials they are using.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have access to a variety of tools, either for child-initiated or teacher-led projects, in, for example, woodworking, sand play, sewing, finger knitting, gardening, construction.</li> </ul>



<p>Find out about and identify the uses of everyday technology and use information and communication technology and programmable toys to support their learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have access to ‘warm’ technology, i.e. hand driven machinery such as grain mills, scales, apple juice press, spinning wheel.</li> <li>● Observe and help operate the bread oven, if available.</li> <li>● Learn to use tools of many sorts, including woodwork tools.</li> <li>● In some cases children have access to cookers, lights etc.</li> </ul>
<p>Find out about past and present events in their lives and in those of their families and other people they know.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Celebrate birthdays, during which the past events in a child’s life are explored with parents and carers.</li> <li>● Enjoy relatives and grandparents visiting the setting.</li> <li>● Learn these concepts through a strong rhythm, which helps them predict recurring events; also through mixed age group differentiation which allows older children to look back over the activities they did when they were aged only four, and younger ones to look forward to being able to do certain things (e.g. knit) when they turn six years old.</li> </ul>
<p>Observe, find out about and identify features in the place they live and the natural world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May play out aspects of their home life during creative play.</li> <li>● Talk about their home and family.</li> <li>● Show their home to the practitioner on a home visit.</li> </ul>
<p>Find out about their environment and talk about those features they like and dislike.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore the garden of the setting, commenting to each other as well as to the practitioners about their activities and feelings.</li> <li>● Explore the wider grounds, fields, woods or neighbourhood, and talk about this to each other as well as to practitioners and parents.</li> </ul>
<p>Begin to know about their own culture and beliefs and those of other people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Celebrate birthdays, celebrations and festivals (cultural and religious) sometimes with carers and other adults from the community.</li> <li>● Begin to treat others and the environment with respect and care.</li> </ul>



## Physical Development

From the EYFS educational programme (page 15 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS)

*The physical development of babies and young children must be encouraged through the provision of opportunities for them to be active and interactive and to improve their skills of coordination, control, manipulation and movement. They must be supported in using all of their senses to learn about the world around them and to make connections between new information and what they already know. They must be supported in developing an understanding of the importance of physical activity and making healthy choices in relation to food.*

### Steiner perspective:

Formal learning relies on dexterity and physical coordination. In Steiner Early Childhood settings children have the opportunity to develop both large and fine motor skills throughout the range of teacher-led and child-initiated activities, such as laying the table, finger games and eurythmy, woodwork, domestic activities and arts and crafts. Outdoor activities range from gardening to tree climbing, digging, wood crafts, water play, and of course free creative play using all the natural and purpose made facilities there may be, e.g. bushes, wooden houses, sand/mud pit, etc. These activities develop hand to eye co-ordination, manual dexterity and orientation. For example, doing some simple sewing or weaving is a useful preparation for reading print from left to right, and a lot of skill and control is needed in woodwork.

Early learning goals as identified in the EYFS Statutory Framework (page 15)	Examples of Steiner practice
<b>By the end of the EYFS most children are expected to:</b>	<b>In Steiner Early Childhood settings, children at an age-appropriate level:</b>
Move with confidence, imagination and in safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Move freely indoors or out, using all the space for their imaginative free play.</li> <li>● Step appropriately to the space, e.g. climb, run and skip outside, walk, crawl, tiptoe inside.</li> </ul>
Move with control and coordination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Move with control and coordination during ring time, eurythmy, running outdoors, climbing etc.</li> <li>● Do this when using tools or during craft activities like painting, sewing, drawing.</li> </ul>
Travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do this during all their free creative play inside and out, e.g. climbing trees, crawling underneath the drape to get into the den, etc.</li> </ul>
Show awareness of space, of themselves and of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use the indoor and outdoor space during free play.</li> <li>● Move with respect for others.</li> <li>● Be aware of others, their toys and play.</li> <li>● Have a sense of their periphery and boundaries.</li> </ul>
Recognise the importance of keeping healthy and those things that contribute to this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are offered healthy snacks.</li> <li>● May be involved in vegetable growing.</li> <li>● Are aware of hygiene in hand washing and keeping clean.</li> </ul>

Recognise the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dress appropriately for the season and weather.</li> <li>• Help each other to dress.</li> <li>• Take off extra layers when hot.</li> <li>• Wear sun hats and sun screen in summer.</li> <li>• Put on correct clothing when cold.</li> </ul>
Use a range of small and large equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use planks and furniture for building in creative play.</li> <li>• Use woodwork tools or digging tools outside.</li> <li>• Use small equipment like cones, shells, dolls, silk/cotton cloths and drapes, etc. for creative play or pattern making.</li> <li>• Use fine motor control tools such as needles for sewing, crayons, scissors, etc.</li> </ul>
Handle tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use sharp tools such as saws, needles, drills etc. (with adult supervision).</li> <li>• Use peelers and knives appropriately when preparing vegetables and fruit for cooking (with adult supervision).</li> </ul>

## Creative Development

From the EYFS educational programme (page 15 of the Statutory Framework for EYFS)

**Children’s creativity must be extended by the provision of support for their curiosity, exploration and play. They must be provided with opportunities to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings, for example, through a variety of art, music, movement, dance, imaginative and role-play activities, mathematics, and design and technology.**

### Steiner perspective:

Creativity and the exercise of imagination lie at the heart of integrated learning at every stage. Children have access to a variety of natural materials, which are used for imaginative play or other activities. They are involved in both artistic (such as painting, drawing, music, dance, puppetry) and domestic activities (cooking, cleaning, gardening, sewing). Crafts are many, often seasonal or festive and part of the yearly rhythm (such as lantern making or building bird feeders). Outside, children also have the opportunity to undertake creative activities in many areas.

Early learning goals as identified in the EYFS Statutory Framework (pages 15–16)	Examples of Steiner practice
<b>By the end of the EYFS most children are expected to:</b>	<b>In Steiner Early Childhood settings, children at an age-appropriate level:</b>
Respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and feel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have access to natural materials which enhance sensory perceptions.</li> <li>• Listen to the human voice in song and speech.</li> <li>• Are listened to with joy and empathy.</li> </ul>

<p>Express and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings by using a widening range of materials, suitable tools, imaginative and role-play, movement, designing and making, and a variety of songs and musical instruments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Become more able to plan their play, using materials and tools more specifically and purposefully.</li> <li>● Design and make their projects, toys and tools.</li> <li>● Enjoy involvement in ring time, games, puppet shows and plays.</li> <li>● Enjoy playing instruments to accompany games, stories, songs, plays and puppet shows.</li> <li>● Dress up and role-play in their own initiated activities and imaginative play.</li> </ul>
<p>Explore colour, texture, shape, form and space in two and three dimensions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Draw and paint on a weekly basis.</li> <li>● Cook and bake on a weekly basis.</li> <li>● Engage in crafts, e.g. sewing, woodwork, finger knitting, modelling in clay and beeswax, etc.</li> <li>● Have regular access to sand, water and mud.</li> <li>● Construct with blocks of wood, large wooden stands and cloths, planks, boxes, and furniture.</li> <li>● May help construct and landscape the outdoor environment, e.g. build a wall, lay a patio, make paths, plant flower beds.</li> </ul>
<p>Recognise and explore how sounds can be changed, sing simple songs from memory, recognise repeated sounds and sound patterns and match movements to music.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sing, rhyme and move in daily ring time and weekly eurythmy sessions.</li> <li>● Play simple instruments like little lyres, wooden shakers, coco shells, etc. in accompaniment to stories, songs and plays.</li> <li>● Play clapping and rhythm games.</li> </ul>
<p>Use their imagination in art and design, music, dance, imaginative role-play and stories.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Play freely, and with imagination.</li> <li>● Make up stories during play and set up puppet shows.</li> <li>● Speak, call, sing and move freely indoors and out.</li> <li>● Draw, paint, sew, woodwork in child-initiated as well as teacher-led sessions.</li> <li>● Make crafts to suit the season or festival or play, with or without adult supervision.</li> </ul>

## Section 4



### Observation, assessment and planning

#### EYFS Statutory Framework

The EYFS Statutory Framework states that ‘Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. Providers must ensure that practitioners are observing children and responding appropriately to help them make progress from birth towards the early learning goals. Where practitioners require additional training in order to assess capably and objectively, it is the responsibility of the provider to ensure practitioners receive the support that they need. Assessments should be based on practitioners’ observation of what children are doing in their day-to-day activities. As judgements are based on observational evidence gathered from a wide range of learning and teaching contexts, it is expected that all adults who interact with the child should contribute to the process, and that account will be taken of information provided by parents. An essential feature of parental involvement is an ongoing dialogue, building on the partnership begun by any previous practitioner(s). Settings should report progress and achievements to parents throughout the EYFS.’

The EYFS Statutory Framework also ‘sets out detailed formative assessment suggestions in the *Look, listen and note* section of the areas of Learning and Development. Practitioners should:

- make systematic observations and assessments of each child’s achievements, interests and learning styles;
- use these observations and assessments to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child;
- match their observations to the expectations of the early learning goals.’

*(EYFS Statutory Framework, page 16)*

The EYFS Statutory Framework also states that ‘the EYFS Profile must be completed by the provider where the child spends the majority of time between 8am and 6pm. Providers should take account of all available records and of any formal or informal discussions with the parents and with those involved with children in the previous year.’ *(EYFS Statutory Framework, page 17)* It is a statutory requirement that the EYFS Profile is completed for all five-year-olds, whether they are transferring into Steiner schools or mainstream primary education (unless the setting is exempt – see below).

## Steiner perspective

In this chapter we give the Steiner view on how Steiner early childhood practitioners can meet the requirements for observation, assessment and planning. In line with the guidance set out in the EYFS 'Principles into Practice' card 3.1: Observation, Assessment and Planning, Steiner practitioners clearly endeavour always to start with the child, plan for effective practice, reflect on their practice, observe and assess children, and meet challenges and dilemmas.

## 1. Planning and preparation

### Planning

Steiner Waldorf early childhood practitioners work together with colleagues to plan their work and prepare stories, songs, verses and activities appropriate to the children's age, the time of year (season/ festival) or sometimes to an individual child's life situation. Planning guidelines can be found in the EYFS CD-ROM, and in the guidelines. The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship has developed some pro-forma planning, observation and assessment sheets for use in the kindergarten.

Most settings follow both longer term and weekly plans, though some practitioners may use individual planning formats. Planning is seen as a tool of organisation as well as a form of communication with other colleagues and parents. Although all planning is necessarily structured within a certain format, it is used flexibly and practitioners may divert from it if the need arises, such as when a visitor might come to present in a special activity, or a sudden change of weather might provide an opportunity for a picnic in the garden.

Festivals, birthdays, parents' evenings, events, outings and the main seasonal activities (e.g. apple juicing) are outlined in the practitioner's yearly plan which pertains to the whole kindergarten group. Although many activities, for example ring time or snack time, occur daily and are purposely repetitive, they are normally still marked on daily plans and are finely differentiated between settings according to individual groups' needs. Craft activities such as painting or domestic activities like baking are pre-planned and take place on the same day each week. Sometimes such activities are planned to meet the specific needs of certain groups of children.

Individual children's needs, though noted in the evaluation process, are as far as possible met through regular group activities. In case of specific learning differences an IEP is used to help focus strategies and resources. The child's parents are also consulted to help address the problem.

### Preparation

Establishing a calm and nurturing environment that supports and encourages creativity in the child is an important part of the Steiner practitioner's preparation. Practitioners spend a considerable amount of time each day preparing their activities and materials for the session. They create focal points of beauty in the form of nature tables, flower arrangements and other seasonal decorations designed to enhance the imagination.

Practitioners often meet early in the morning before the session in order to call to mind the inner seriousness of their task. This may be through sharing of a meditative verse, a practice that helps the staff to strengthen and focus their minds on the needs of the children. At the end of the morning, they review the session as a whole as well as the children's play, social interaction and their participation in the activities. This review may inform the fine-tuning of further short-term planning within the group.

All the staff undertake the necessary administrative duties for the smooth running of the group. During the weekly kindergarten meetings the teachers work alongside assistants and other colleagues to review their work with the children. These meetings provide an opportunity to re-evaluate planning and recording strategies and to keep abreast of the requirements for further training in areas such as child protection, the EYFS, Special Educational Needs (SEN), new legislation, equal opportunities, first aid, health and safety, food hygiene and keeping children safe.

Practitioners attend occasional short training courses provided by the local authority and the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. Regional cluster group meetings, which are inclusive of both mainstream and Steiner settings, are usually attended on a regular basis, in order for teachers to exchange and discuss pedagogical methods and moderate practice.

Activities in Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood settings are, as we have seen, largely child led and involve mostly play and some craft or domestic activities. Practitioners provide a very steady rhythm, which embeds these activities and ensures much wholesome repetition. The groups are purposely kept small, usually not more than 20 children per session. The practitioners therefore have an easy overview of individual children, and can quite easily follow their activities, while modelling behaviour and skills, by gently involving and observing them.

## 2. Observation and assessment

*'Just think what feelings arise in the soul of the early childhood educator who realises: what I accomplish with this child, I accomplish for the grown-up person in his twenties. What matters is not so much a knowledge of abstract educational principles or pedagogical rules... what does matter is that a deep sense of responsibility develops in our hearts and minds and affects our world view and the way we stand in life.'*

Rudolf Steiner. Untranslated lecture, *Education in the face of the present-day world situation*, 10/6/1920

Observation as the basis for formative assessment in the Steiner Waldorf setting plays an important part of the practitioner's kindergarten work.

Detailed observation is necessary to gain an understanding of each child's holistic development and educational progress. The emphasis is on observing of the 'whole child', including the physical body and family situation. This practice is part of a non-judgmental ongoing process of 'picture building', which begins with the first meeting between teacher, parent and child at their initial interview, and concludes at the end of the two or three year kindergarten cycle or when the child leaves the setting. At this stage each child is assessed for Class 1 (school) readiness in a rigorous summative assessment process, or information on the child is provided for the child's next teacher or school.

Child observations and assessments are regularly shared with parents, who contribute to and partner their child's education. Observations can be expressed in a variety of forms, for instance, notes, photographs, the child's record, a child study, an IEP, the profile and/or an end of year report.

### Principles governing the process of picture building

The Steiner Waldorf early childhood practitioner:

- observes the whole child: physical, emotional, social, cognitive and speech development;
- sees learning and development as a continuous process through the child's time in kindergarten. The Steiner Waldorf early childhood practitioner is patient in his or her wait to see the real fruits of the work. These often do not appear in the child until the third year in the kindergarten as he/she approaches the transition to formal learning;
- uses insight rather than measurement; the question in the mind of the Steiner Waldorf practitioner is: 'Who are you?' rather than 'What can you do?'
- makes an attempt to understand the unfolding character and destiny of the child;

- makes developmentally appropriate observations, i.e. the importance of not fixing a child's development in time;
- observes in different contexts within the rhythm of the day, e.g. play or snack time;
- observes naturally occurring activities, not set up purposefully by the practitioner;
- interprets observations, e.g. a stage of drawing according to the guidelines given by Michaela Strauss in *Understanding Children's Drawings*, Rudolf Steiner Press, 2007;
- respects and refrains from hurrying the child's natural speed of development;
- shares observations and insights with parents and practitioners;
- meditates on the child, holding the child in his or her thoughts (a process termed 'inner work');
- works to develop an intuitive understanding of the child (to understand better one's observation and its significance).

## Various processes of picture building

### Interview

The practitioner meets the parents and child for the first time, normally in the kindergarten setting, where one can observe the child's physicality, speech, social interaction with a stranger as well as with the parents, and possibly observe activities like drawing and some play. An interview with the parents helps to portray the culture of the family, the home environment and routines, the child's health, interests, behaviour and any possible difficulties. The practitioner gleans some of the child's special characteristics, including preferences and possibly special needs. The interview serves the parents equally, by initiating them into the kindergarten's ways and the wider expectations that the school may have for them. It establishes the beginnings of a long and very important cooperative partnership in the education of the child.

### Work with parents

The relationship between practitioner, parent and child is deepened over time through a variety of means; an example may be a home visit, which is made at least once but sometimes several times in a year. Parents are provided with frequent opportunities to speak with the practitioner about their child, either informally at pick-up time, via the telephone or in a more formal pre-arranged meeting. They are also invited to termly parents' evenings which offer them a change to discuss the curriculum and ask any questions they might have.

Many settings offer workshops for parents, the aim of which is to establish a close link between home and school and develop a shared understanding of child development and good child rearing practice.

Practitioners gain many valued insights into the nature of the child through this well-fostered relationship. Equally, it allows the parents to share in and positively influence the evaluation of their child's progress and development.





### Daily session evaluation

It is usual for practitioners to converse with their colleagues on a daily or weekly basis about their planned as well as ad hoc child observations and notes in order to review their work. Judgments made are likely to inform further planning, either for the whole group, part of the group or indeed individual children. For instance, the oldest group may need extra time to finish their sewing, or a child with a hearing problem needs to sit opposite the practitioner at snack time in order to lip-read better, or another needs more attention than usual from the practitioner because his mother is in hospital, and so on.

Equally, practitioners make notes of children's achievements, for example the quality of a finished skipping rope, a wooden handle hollowed out and sanded, or a finger knitted cord. Maybe there is the child who for the first time joined in singing at ring time, a physically weak child who bravely climbed a small tree, etc.

Practitioners keep careful records of whom they assess, so as to ensure regular observation of all the children, even those who do not yet attend full-time. Settings choose their own format for recording individual children's development and learning. Observation assessment data is usually fed into the child's profile picture.

### Child study

Steiner practitioners frequently use the means of child study to understand in detail a child's particular needs. Over the course of at least a week, detailed observations of the child are made by all the practitioners working with him or her. These include the physical body, personal mannerisms, social interaction, speech, play etc. The practitioner makes extensive written notes and then shares those with the parents of the child, who are asked to contribute to the picture as well. Finally, the observations are shared in a meeting with other early childhood colleagues. A special verse for the child is chosen and then all the practitioners carry the picture produced by the study in their thoughts and through sleep. A week later comments are exchanged and discussed. This process frequently produces valuable insights, which not only help the practitioners to understand the child more deeply, but often lead to changes in the relationship between adult and child. This may be in the form of strategies and activities, resulting in improvements to the problem. Even just a small and almost undetectable change can have a powerful and positive effect on the child.

## IEP

Although children's needs are normally met within group strategies, it can happen that a child has individual requirements and learning differences which call for expert advice and specific therapeutic measures. In this case the practitioner draws up a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) supervised IEP, often in connection with a child study. This document specifically states the child's needs and how the practitioner attempts to meet them. Strategies and resources are listed and the parents are asked not only to contribute their most valuable insights but also to implement the remedies identified. Frequently the school doctor or eurythmist is also consulted and suggested therapy followed.

## Child record

Good practice includes keeping a detailed development record of each child, which includes vital statistics, home visit reports, logs of meetings with parents, study and observation records and the profile, as well as evidence of children's work. These are made available on demand to anyone who needs to see them.

## End of year report

At the end of each school year the practitioner usually writes reports to the parents; these will also summarise the five-year-old child's development across the six areas of learning, in line with government requirements. Parents also have access to their child's profile, whether a Steiner one, or the EYFS Profile document, which can form part of the regular and extensive parent-practitioner exchanges and discussions throughout the year.

## Class 1 or school readiness assessment

Six-year-old children, who are at the end of the three-year kindergarten period, may enter into the main school's Class 1, which demands certain skills and readiness for a curriculum of formal learning. In order to ascertain the readiness of a child, Steiner practitioners assess maturity of movement, speech, drawing skills, social and emotional development, as well as physical health and development. Observations are recorded in a specially formatted profile or report, which is passed on to the Class 1 teacher.

If there is any doubt about the child's readiness, or should they fall outside the cut-off dates for admission to the school, the school doctor or a member of the school admissions team observes the child and gives their recommendation. Parents are also consulted and a collaborative decision is reached. In cases of learning difficulties, learning support is sought and recommendations to the class teacher are issued. As always, parents are involved in the process of planning for the special needs of their child.



## Section 5



### Learning and Development – exemptions and inspection

Further guidance for providers on exemptions from the EYFS Learning and Development requirements can be found on the following website: [www.qcda.gov.uk](http://www.qcda.gov.uk)

Information on Ofsted inspections: [www.Ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk)

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship advisory service offers advice and help to individual kindergarten teachers and settings on meeting regulations. Email: [admin@steinerwaldorf.org.uk](mailto:admin@steinerwaldorf.org.uk)

## Section 6



### Further reading and useful addresses

#### Essential reading

##### **The Early Years Foundation Stage (2008)**

Published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families

Available from [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)

Order from:

DCSF Publications

PO Box 5050

Sherwood Park, Annesley

Nottingham NG15 0DJ

Tel: 0845 60 222 60

Email: [dcsf@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dcsf@prolog.uk.com)

Ref: 00261-2008PCK-EN

ISBN: 978-1-84775-128-7

##### **The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile handbook (2008)**

Published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

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Lists of schools, Early Childhood settings and training organisations and bookshops are available from:

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International Association of Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE)

[www.iaswece.org](http://www.iaswece.org)

Alliance for Childhood UK

[www.allianceforchildhood.org.uk](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org.uk)

## Further reading

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## Journal

*Kindling, Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood*

Email: [earlyyearsnews@aol.com](mailto:earlyyearsnews@aol.com)

Tel: 01223 890988

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## Section 7



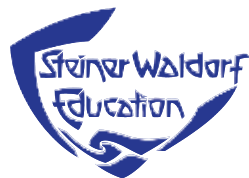
## Acknowledgements

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**This booklet is endorsed by the Steiner Waldorf Early Years Group**





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