

# Talking Trees

The newsletter for Norwich Steiner School, Kindergartens & Parent & Child Groups

26<sup>th</sup> April 2012

## Dates for your diary

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May – Mayday festival  
Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June – Inset day  
Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> June – St Johns festival  
Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June – Inset day  
Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July – Last day of term

## Massage in Willow Class

Jo Tyler, Parent

Between the Christmas holidays and February half-term I went into Willow Class twice a week to teach the children to massage each other, in a spirit of respect and as a means of introducing nurturing touch to the classroom. Having started off with a smoothie massage, a pizza massage (this one was particularly popular) and the story of the hungry caterpillar, we moved on to a weather massage and finally the full massage routine, involving quite a number of different strokes, some of which require considerable practice. The children enjoyed the massage, and even those who were reluctant to join in at the beginning were giving beautiful massages by half term. In between bouts of tickling and noisiness it was wonderful to observe the children really concentrating, in many cases giving very tender massages, and when silence fell upon the whole room I (and I hope everyone) experienced a great sense of calm and relaxation.

The children are continuing with the massage, under Nina's supervision, and I look forward to hearing about the longer-term benefits of doing regular massage in the classroom. I have been delighted to hear that parents have also been enjoying massage at home! Massage in Schools Programme: [www.massageinschools.com](http://www.massageinschools.com)

## The Interim Management Team

By Jeremy Nowell

Many parents will be aware that the school has a new management team, established at the request of the trustees in response to advice from the SWSF and the Schools Inspection Service (SIS). In many ways this is not a 'new' team. Following the advice from the above bodies, the trustees asked the school to identify who was carrying out the day to day management of the school and to formalise this.

Our school is still developing and much of its energy is properly directed towards its growth and continuing journey 'upwards and outwards.' This means that it has not yet been possible to develop a college of teachers capable of taking responsibility for running areas of the school. This has left the school with something of a management vacuum, with individuals often being left to take unlimited responsibility for situations as they have unfolded, without clear lines of responsibility or accountability. We need to acknowledge where this has happened in the past, and at what ongoing personal cost to the individuals concerned.

There is no question that this can be allowed to happen in the future. The school needs and deserves to be properly managed, which means clear lines of responsibility and accountability have had to be established as a matter of urgency. In the meantime the teaching staff continues to work with the vision of creating a functioning college of teachers, but recognises this may not happen in the near future.

Some parents may be aware that there was a second, surprise SIS inspection in November 2011, during which the Chief Inspector, Simon Bennett, advised that without a coherent structure and clear leadership, particularly in times of crisis, it is possible to end up with a 'vacuum of interference and confusion.' He recommended that, in order to safeguard the school, we should find a structure which ensured there are clear lines of communication, accountability and responsibility, but which still retained the Steiner ethos. This is not an easy task, and those who are currently fulfilling this role are acutely aware of the balance that must constantly be sought when providing elements of leadership in a Steiner setting. To help us to achieve this, the trustees have asked the team to develop clear Terms of Reference; a process that is currently under way.

Members of the management team and their initial areas of responsibility are:

Jeremy Nowell - lesson planning and formative assessment in school; initial contact for events proposals  
Susan Brown - organisation and planning in kindergarten;

Sandie Tolhurst - finance, personnel, concerns and policies.

Rachel Hales - staff pastoral care; overview of lesson planning in school & kindergarten.

## **Premises: Use of space & development of facilities**

By Sandie Tolhurst

After much deliberation & discussion both amongst ourselves and with SWSF Upper School specialists Roy Allen and Josie Alwyn & also Kevin Avison our SWSF Lower School advisor, it has finally been decided to make the following changes to the use of the premises:

*The Parent & Child Group washrooms* - the toilets and sinks are going to be stripped out & this room is going to become the school woodwork room, along with a portion of the covered courtyard.

*The large Parent & Child Group room* - is going to become the new science laboratory, but will also be used for handwork and as a classroom for upper school pupils. Part of the walk-in cupboard in this room will become a locked storage space for chemicals and part will become a preparation room (ie a place where the science teacher decants chemicals for use in lessons from large to smaller containers).

*The existing woodwork room* - is going to become an upper school class and art room.

The above proposals take into account the next 4-5 years and some of the reasoning and advantages of this approach are identified below:

1. **Creation of two upper school specialist classrooms** (the science/handwork & art/classroom), hopefully negating the need to relocate either of the kindergartens in the near future.
2. **Expansion of woodwork & metalwork facilities** - Provision of an adjacent outdoor area in the form of a fenced off portion of the covered courtyard, to allow the establishment of a forge for metalwork and space for children to spread out when using shave horses, for example.
3. **Taking advantage of what's available to save longer term costs** - what used to be Earlham High School and is now the City Academy of Norwich, is disposing of furniture, which means that for minimal cost, science benching and stools, handwork tables, plus hopefully other equipment such

as science glassware, sewing machines, painting easels etc, will be available for us to collect and install around mid/end June. Thus if equipment is available now, it makes sense to establish a larger laboratory; otherwise we may have set up a smaller laboratory, but with the need to move it and make it larger in a couple of years time to accommodate bigger class sizes. Lower school pupils may also use the laboratory during science main lessons.

Thank you to Jane Wells, Parent & Child Group parent, who kindly put us in touch with the City Academy Norwich.

## **European Portfolio Certificate (EPC)**

By Sandie Tolhurst

This is something we are pursuing with interest, alongside the European Waldorf Diploma (EWD). As explained previously, the EWD is still to be piloted and accredited and so until such a time as this process is completed, we are unable to rely on it for current students. However, the EPC is an approved scheme, which is already up and running in continental Europe and is increasingly being taken up by Steiner Upper Schools in the UK (including Michael Hall & Ringwood).

As the name suggests, it comprises a 'portfolio' approach, defined within the guidelines as "a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas." Within this approach, pupils choose which areas of study they wish to develop into a portfolio project for certification.

The work involved in each project depends upon which skills a pupil wishes to develop or demonstrate. At the end of each project the pupils carry out a review of their own work and are expected to reflect on lessons learnt and areas they did well in. Strict criteria and guidelines govern whether work achieves the standard required to gain a European Portfolio Certificate or not. Due to the level of pupil involvement and self-evaluation, the EPC is increasingly being seen as providing valuable evidence of the ability of Waldorf pupils to think and work independently, using their own initiative.

We have a few reference copies of the Guidelines for the European Portfolio Certificate for parents who are interested to look at. They have cost the school £3 each, so if parents would like their own copy, we will need to order some in. Alternately, more information can be found from either of the following websites: [www.ecswe.org](http://www.ecswe.org) or [www.epc-group.org](http://www.epc-group.org)

## Host families for Visiting Students

By Sandie Tolhurst, School Administrator

We are currently exploring the possibility of starting a Visiting Students Programme during the next academic year. This is because, as there are only a few Upper Schools in the UK, there is apparently an unfulfilled demand for placements from Steiner pupils from countries such as Germany, who wish to spend a term or half term in an equivalent class in a UK Steiner School. We have already received expressions of interest from two German pupils.

Therefore, we would like to hear from families who might be interested in hosting Class 9 pupils from continental Europe (e.g. Germany or Scandinavia) for a half term or term in the next academic year, so that we can then make a decision as to whether it will be possible to run a programme for visiting students next year or not.

There are obvious advantages to establishing a programme for visiting students, not only that it would be beneficial socially and financially for the school, but also because it would help to provide international links and open pathways of communication with overseas Steiner schools & pupils, which could have long-term benefits for pupil in years to come.

Essentially and because the children are under 16 years of age, potential host parents will need to be prepared to act in *loco parentis* during the duration of the pupils visit. Naturally, host parents can expect to be paid for providing accommodation & parenting for the child during their visit to the UK.

National Guidelines for host parents of overseas students exist and we are developing a policy & procedure based on the Visiting Student Programme already successfully operated by Ringwood Waldorf School, so if any family is interested in hosting a visiting pupil, please do let us know as soon as possible and we can provide more detailed information as to what being a host family might entail.

## Oak Class

By Jeremy Nowell, Class teacher

I'm not sure I've ever enjoyed a start to the term as much as this one. The joy and enthusiasm of the children were infectious, and there were times when it seemed almost futile to try and contain it. The best I could do was to steer the rolling ship in roughly the right direction. The gifts the children bring with them each term are so beautiful. Sometimes it is a sadness, a loss perhaps, that is quietly acknowledged, opening up an as yet unexplored

path. Sometimes it is a story, something that happened during the holidays, that elicits wonder, amusement or incredulity. Always it is the individuality of the child, finding its place once more in the classroom, seeking out old friends and new, exploring the familiar, eager to set out on a new journey. For some that journey into the unknown is as frightening as it is exciting. We admire the boldness with which some children dive in, and we cherish the inner struggle of those who find it the hardest thing in the world to peer over the edge. Oak Class reveals the depth of its collective soul when it manages to forge a single sense of direction from the assorted dreams, abilities, anxieties and gifts of such diverse individuals. I had such a strong sense of this on the first day of term, and find myself facing the new term, as always, with a sense of wonder, awe and deep gratitude.

## Your Child's School Needs You!

*Volunteering and the crucial role this has to play in the running of the school.*

By Carol Ainsworth school secretary

As you are probably aware, we do not receive any government funding so it is a fine line between paying the bills, but at the same time keeping the fees relatively low so that the school can continue to attract new pupils, and indeed survive. As such we rely on volunteers to give their time/skills in a variety of ways. Many parents may not be aware of the huge amount of work which is undertaken by a relatively small body of volunteers and these are a few examples:

- Personnel/Payroll / Admin roles are partly supported (to a greater/lesser degree) by volunteers on a daily/weekly basis.
- Premises & caretaker roles are largely managed and undertaken voluntarily
- Trustees
- Events Team
- Craft Group

Additionally, staff continue to give many additional voluntary hours of their time.

We would like to acknowledge the above and thank everyone who helps in this way and also those who have made donations, – the school quite literally would not be here without you!

## Opportunities to help and get involved.....

Now, with the exciting plans for the Upper School firmly under way (please see separate article by Sandie), we are seeking volunteers to help with the conversion of three rooms in order to provide a

science lab/handwork room and art/classroom and a new woodwork space. So if there are any parents/grandparents/friends who feel that they have some time or skills they can offer then we would **urge** you to get in touch very soon so that we can get an idea as to how much help we can expect. Work on the classrooms will start at/after the half term break and needs to be completed before school returns in September. **So if there are any handymen/women or skilled tradesmen, we would love to hear from you. Similarly if you know of any willing grandparents, we would love to hear from them too. There will no doubt be some tasks for the less-skilled volunteers also.**

#### Other volunteering opportunities

**Renovating Wooden School Sign** - is there a parent/grandparent out there who would be willing to renovate/embellish the wooden circular school sign which is at the front of the building? This has been looking very faded and 'unappealing' for a long time. It would be great if someone could sand this down and re-varnish it and give it a face lift, so to speak.

**Sweeping the outside tarmac areas** - this is an ongoing job, and can be done as and when convenient. Just after drop-off or pick-up time usually works well.

#### **Cleaning windows**

#### **Helping with/at a school event**

**Attending a workday/cleaning day** - these are held during the holidays at the end of each term and our parent handbook stipulates that parents are required to attend at least one a year. We do not enforce this rule but would appreciate it if everyone made this their goal. (It can actually be very rewarding to meet up with other parents & children in order to get the school nice and clean before they return back to school!).

**A volunteer to help gather/co-ordinate parent support would also be very welcome!**

*Please call in at the school office, or send an e-mail, if you are able to offer any time/support. Thank you.*

#### **Parent & Child Group Updates**

By Sandie Tolhurst, School Administrator

Following the mid-summer half term holiday, although parent & child groups will no longer be running from the school, we are delighted to learn that three current parent & child group staff:

Catherine Mack, Luci Firks & Helen Kibblewhite, have decided to set up new independent groups.

As part of our consultation with parent & child group staff, we have agreed the following measures to support new groups:

#### **Affiliation to the school**

Nearly all staff requested that there is ongoing contact and support from the school, and asked if groups could be affiliated to the school. There was a difference of opinion, however, between staff as to what this should mean or involve.

After some deliberation however, the school has decided to adopt a similar interpretation of the term "Affiliated to" as the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. Thus we will consider "Organisations or groups with compatible aims and objectives in mutually supportive communication with Norwich Steiner School" to be eligible for Affiliation.

The school will, by September 2012, provide a simple list of basic expectations in order to meet 'compatibility of aims and objectives' as mentioned above, including criteria such as use of toys made of natural materials etc.

A register of affiliated parent & child groups will be established containing the following information:

- Name and contact details of group leader
- Day and time their group meets
- Location of group
- A sentence of what group offers (e.g. snack, outside time etc)

Affiliated groups will be able to advertise their group on an amended parent & child group page on our website, and submit articles and adverts to be included in Talking Trees as well as display posters/fliers in the school reception.

#### **Festival attendance**

Most staff requested that Independent parent & child groups be invited to festivals, so that those attending the groups can feel they are part of a wider educational system. Although this may not be practical in the future as numbers increase, it was agreed that for key festivals such as Martinmas, Mayday and St Johns, affiliated groups would be invited to attend.

#### **Start up grant**

A small start up grant of £200 (paid in 4 instalments) is being made available for existing Parent & Child group staff who set up & run regular (at least once a week during term time) new groups.

### **Equipment ownership & reallocation**

Parent & Child group equipment that is not owned already by individual members of staff, is going to be fairly and equally divided up amongst those staff starting new groups.

We have also suggested that those starting new groups make a list of 'wanted' equipment widely available, in case any parents who no longer have small children might have items available to donate.

### **Jound Geck Terg Fape Spron Snemp**

By Jacqui Armour, Kindergarten Assistant and Willow Class parent

During the Easter holidays my eight-year-old son, who is in Willow class, read to me for the first time.

He read with meaning, understanding, confidence and enjoyment, using intonation and different voices, and had many different strategies to call upon when he met a new word. This was a wonderful moment for both of us.

This June *five to six year-old* children in all maintained schools, academies and free schools will be tested on their 'phonic decoding ability'. Made up, 'non- sense' words will be used for up to 50% of the test.

While education is so much more than learning to read, reading is an important (and emotive) skill. The simplistic exclusive focus on synthetic phonics extolled by the government distorts and limits children's learning and narrows the breadth of their experience.

'Readiness for reading requires that all systems involved have received sufficient stimulation in the early years. This includes development of balance, coordination, postural control and fine motor skills to facilitate writing; control of eye movements and the ability to hear and say all of the sounds required for reading and spelling. These basic skills are nurtured not through direct teaching of reading and writing in the pre-school years, but through physical and imaginative play, singing, conversation, being told stories.' (Sally Goddard Blythe, Director of the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology).

And this is what kindergarten does. Play is never *just* play.

In our kindergartens the children are completely immersed in language, in internal and external imaginative narrative. They absorb the structure, vitality and beauty of language naturally, so that later, when they read, they really *are* reading, not

displaying their decoding ability.

It can feel like a massive leap of faith, to stay on this slow educational path, when all around us other parents, 'experts' and the government are urging ever earlier literacy intervention and more intense, accelerated learning, but, as I have seen, the results are truly worth waiting for.

(Jound Geck Terg Fape Spron and Snemp are examples from a practice phonics screening test)

### **Feedback from a Language Conference for Steiner teachers**

By Andrea Lord, German teacher

Earlier this year, to be precise in January, Madame Lizer and I were lucky enough to attend a conference in Bologna, Italy, on "The Teaching of Foreign Languages in Waldorf Schools in XXIst Century: Its Challenges and Future Perspectives". It sounded an exciting backdrop to our stay, however, the conference proved to be all encompassing and no time was wasted on frivolities. This hardly seemed to matter though when it gave me great scope in evaluating how my German teaching compared with other Steiner Waldorf foreign language teachers from all over Europe, in contents, subject matter and delivery.

We met some truly inspiring people - being fellow teachers, students and lecturers. One of which I would like to highlight especially namely Nicolai Petersen, for his outstanding wit, humour and sincerity in the delivery of German grammar (I would not have believed it possible!).

Last but not least one thought I would like to share: in the Russian language, the word "learning" means to teach yourself; what a wonderful idea given, that both the teacher and the pupil can take on the roles of learner and facilitator simultaneously. Ein gutes Erwachen fuer alle!

### **The Science of Colour**

By Mrs Higgins, Birch class teacher

For the children in our school an experience of colour begins in their earliest years. In kindergarten children experiment with primary colours and their combinations and at the same time develop a technique with paintbrush and water. This activity continues into Class 1 where they work with the personality of colours. When the children have acquired an understanding of the nature of colour, they begin to work with form. It takes some practice mastering the waywardness of water. When this is achieved, the transition to harder substances is

easier for them.

Birch class were veterans of colour qualities when they began physics a month ago, but their job was now to find out the truth about colour. Our common understanding (in the Newtonian sense) is that the spectrum of warm and cool colours is contained within light itself. Years of painting sunsets was a preparation for Birch class to realise that colour is most dramatic at the in between times where we see an interaction between light and dark. So, taking Goethe's theory using glass prisms, we studied the phenomenon of colour by observing light meeting dark.

All subjects contained within the Steiner curriculum are dealt with through their polarities - everything has its opposite and working with this allows the children to find their own balance in the understanding of a subject. This is also the case with colour. We saw that just as colours have their shadowy opposite or complementary colour, that they also are visible not from light alone but from where light meets darkness. It seems that as a culture we have taken Newton's theory to be correct. Perhaps this reflects the one sidedness of our 'enlightened' thinking where we push away the dark - frightened of our own shadow. The obvious repercussions of the content of this lesson are not made explicit for the children but rather left as sediment for the future.

### Parent & Child Group News & request for equipment

From Luci Firks, Helen Kibblewhite & Catherine Mack

At the summer half term holiday, the Parent and Child Groups will be very sad to be leaving the school and the lovely room that has been our home for the last few years to make way for the building work required for the development of an upper school.

The Parent and Child staff are doing their best to be in a position to offer Parent and Child Groups at other venues after the half term holiday. We hope the groups will be affiliated with the school so that the families will still be invited to be part of some outdoor festivals and we plan to keep closely in touch with the kindergarten staff to work on how the transition to kindergarten can be as good as possible.

Unfortunately the current staff will be unable to offer a group on Fridays away from the school, so we hope that it will be possible for these families to join groups which we plan to set up on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

As groups are running from different venues, additional sets of equipment are needed and we would appreciate as much help as possible to acquire this equipment in order that the new groups may be properly resource. Below is a list of the type of things we currently use in our groups, which we require more of in view of setting up in various locations. If anyone has any of these items that are no longer needed or wanted, or if anyone wishes to make a specific item; e.g. dolls, blocks....please consider donating them to us.

A separate sheet within this newsletter has a list of equipment we are looking for.....please pin it up on your notice board, check your attics for those old forgotten toys...

If you are able to help please leave a name with the item so we can thank you, or return it if we end up with too many of the same thing!! We will leave a box in reception for things to be left or you can always approach a member of Parent and Child group staff. If anyone has a query or wishes to discuss particular items please contact Helen Kibblewhite on 07745 193809, Luci Firks on 07733 350177 or Catherine Mack on 07900 446826. Thankyou.

### Summary table of parent & child groups on offer from June 2012

DAY	PLACE	LEADER
Tuesday	St Thomas' Church Hall, Earlham Road, Norwich	Luci Firks, 07733 350177
Wednesday & Thursday	20 Unthank Road, Norwich	Catherine Mack, 07900 446826
Thursday	20 Unthank Road, Norwich	Catherine Mack 07900 446826
To be confirmed:		
<b>Tuesday or Wednesday</b> - Helen Kibblewhite hopes to offer a group on Tuesday or Wednesday at Welborne Village Hall, which is a lovely rural location ten miles west of Norwich and four miles east of Dereham. Phone 01362 850426 or email <a href="mailto:helen.kibblewhite@yahoo.co.uk">helen.kibblewhite@yahoo.co.uk</a> for details		
<b>Tuesday</b> - Katie Baxter plans to lead the current Tuesday group at Bev Wildings house at Hempsall until the end of the Summer term.		

## Root Children Parent and Child Group

By Luci Firks, current parent & child group staff

I am developing a new parent and child group for families with very young children (up to 3 years and 6 months), to start on Tuesday June 12th. The group will take a similar form to current groups; free play with simple and natural toys, art and craft, seasonal ring time songs, sharing an organic snack and garden time. After much searching I have decided to run the group from St. Thomas' Hall on Earlham Road (ever so slightly further towards the city than Earlham house shops and the Green Grocers). The group will run on Tuesday mornings from 10.45 to 12.45 with the snack at midday. The cost of each session will be £7.50. If anyone would like to join me or would like more information please contact me; Luci Firks, on 07733 350177/lucifirks@gmail.com or catch me around the school (my son is Ike in Maple Kindergarten and I currently work in the Parent and Child Group on a Tuesday morning).

The Name of the group comes from one of my favourite books; *The Story of the Root Children* by Sibylle von Olfers; wherein the root children are cared for below ground by Mother Earth during the autumn and winter months before going above ground, in the springtime, in their forms of flowers and grasses to meet and explore the world. This to me is a beautiful metaphor for children being nourished by their parents during the very early years and moving forward to kindergarten and beyond. My hope is that my group will help families in their nourishment of their young children and of each other.

Little by little, the acorn said,  
As it slowly sank in its mossy bed,  
I am improving every day,  
Hidden deep in the earth away.  
Little by little, each day it grew,  
Little by little it sipped the dew,  
Downward it sent out a tiny root,  
Up in the air sprang a tiny shoot.  
Day after day and year after year,  
Little by little the leaves appear.  
The slender branches spread far and wide,  
Till the mighty oak is the forest's pride.

(from Wynstones press "spring")

## Number work in Willow class

By Ms Scaife, Willow Class teacher

Through the experience of number qualities, the children experience trust and security: number world and human being belong together.

"The dynamics of will activity should be internalised by the experience of countability. Motivation should be awakened through pictorial description of number qualities. This dual aspect is important; on the one hand it educates the bodily senses through experience of movement, unfolding of movement possibilities and co-ordination exercises. On the other hand, internalising of the expressed activities in soul activity (ie; calculation). Here the main medium for achieving this is the use of pictures." (Extract from *The Educational Tasks & content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum*)

Through pictures, children can grasp internally what is intended. Pure symbolic, logical presentation can never achieve this.

Memorising times tables is developed through rhythmic movement for example, clapping, stamping, passing beanbags or skipping.

In Willow Class, we are learning about Place Value using the story of the 'Four Farmers Sons' who were used earlier on in the year to introduce processes.

'Andrew Add' is having problems with counting up all his apples so his very clever wife organises his crop into singles (units), bags of tens and boxes of hundreds to make things easier for him!

We have real apples, bags and boxes to work with first then use a pictorial version of the singles, bags and boxes and then finally will be working with these larger numbers and learning how to do vertical sums with carrying and borrowing. Lots of fun!

## Some Somewhat Nostalgic Musings on Parent and Child work

By Catherine Mack, Parent & Child group leader

To those of you who don't know me very well, I have been running Parent and Child groups, first Steiner *inspired*, and then, as we became recognised by the Steiner Schools Fellowship and I became trained in Parent and Child work, Steiner Parent and Childs groups, since 1998.

The Parent and Child groups (originally called Fir Cones Toddlers) eventually grew into large groups running five mornings a week. I think perhaps partly because they were so popular, and partly because Richard and I co-led them for some time (rather experimentally and progressively in a sense) we created a model for a group, that was led by a partnership. Steiner Parent and Child groups were still unusual at that time, and had barely been recognised within the Steiner Educational Movement as a whole. Most groups were held by one person and certainly by one leader! Occasionally children would comment "are Richard and Catherine married?" or "Catherine and Richard live here don't they?" We did inevitably form our own roles which I think were fairly distinct from one another's to complement each other's and as the Anthroposophical idea that the young child needs to know who the leader or main teacher is, so that they know which 'ego' to follow seems to hold some weight. When we went on to run groups separately, we kept a partnership model which worked very well, with a leader and assistant in each group. This of course allowed our groups to accommodate more families than the more usual 6 or 7 in most others around the country that I knew of. I remember whilst attending conferences and courses, other colleagues quite often commenting on how large our groups were. Time and again, I felt confident in reassuring them, that we really could provide a nurturing social environment that was calm and gentle for our children and also intimate enough for our parents and carers to form strong supportive friendships. One of the secrets was, with an assistant's gentle, ever-present care at hand, a leader could really come to the work with a mindful presence that had the capacity to provide a 'good role model' or example for imitation. You see, there really is rather a lot going on in a Steiner Parent and Child group, but like so many things if done well, it looks quite easy.

Our groups form a rich and reliable rhythm, within which we have the space and time to learn from our calm and unhurried observations of our children at play and to be really present with them, hopefully learning to follow their cues, offering only what is needed and learning ever more respectful care in our relationships with them. Parents can unwind

into a 'pocket' of space and time that excludes most of the pressures of the often hurried and perhaps over-burdened or simply rather overwhelming lives they are sometimes finding themselves experiencing. We deliberately endeavour to find a healthier rhythm for the human being and hope our groups can offer a little restoration of the body and soul.

So, after all these years of working out of variable and variegated premises, of which our most recent was the school here at Hospital Lane, we arrive at a new juncture in our development. As I am sure you are all aware, we shall be leaving the building and separating off and going on to pastures anew.

The Parent and Child rooms here have been very comfortable and spacious. Our families have benefited from the facilities and have often commented on how special the rooms feel. They have also often said how good it was to feel the school and kindergartens close by, enjoying the art work of the children on the walls in the passageways, or catching a glimpse of a line of 'big' kindergarten children making their way to their garden to play: 'When I'm bigger, when I'm bigger' my son James used to say pointing excitedly, when we were attending Parent and Child. I personally wish the Upper school and everyone involved in its development, all the very best, and am pleased (now I've got used to it), 'our' precious Parent and Child rooms will be used for such an important new purpose in the next exciting years to come.

The Parent and Child groups will continue in different shapes and form, but will eventually settle into new life.

I am very pleased to be able to offer two mornings a week, a Wednesday and a Thursday morning, in a rather special and homely environment with a garden, tucked away close to the City centre. I am busy preparing everything over the next weeks, in time to start the first week back after the Whitsun break (so determined am I to provide some continuity for our groups!)

I thought it would be a nice idea to call the groups Fir Cones Parent and Child, as the name Fir Cones was never really taken up at the school. We always use various cones as trusty natural play material so the name can also travel, wherever we may go! Fir Cones Parent and Child Groups, 20, Unthank Road, Norwich, NR2 2RA

If you are interested in being put on a waiting list for either of Catherine's mornings, please contact Susen Schaefer on 01953 788581 or 07931502605.