

Talking Trees

The newsletter for Norwich Steiner School

7th September 2014

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday 8th September – first day of term
Friday 26th September – Michaelmas
Thursday 23rd October – last day of term
Friday 24th October – inset day (no school)

WELCOME BACK

We hope parents and children have had a wonderful summer break and are coming back refreshed to start the new academic year. As there have been a number of developments and changes that have taken place over the summer holiday, we felt a good way to start the term was by updating parents through a special, short edition of “Talking Trees”.

LANGUAGES IN LOWER SCHOOL

For the whole of the next academic year, we are trialling a different way of teaching languages in the lower school. Each class will have four lessons a week in EITHER French or German for the first half term, and then will swop to the other language for the second half term, and so on throughout the year.

So for each term, we expect it to look like this:

First half term: Maple and Oak (French); Sequoia and Willow (German)

Second half term: Maple and Oak (German); Sequoia and Willow (French)>

Our main objective is to allow for immersion in one language at a time. Whilst this is being done on a trial basis, it

has come about following much discussion amongst teachers, from listening to the pupils and taking into account research on how children learn languages. So we will be watching, observing and learning with interest how the children respond to this different approach.

SPANISH FOR BIRCH

Following consultation with parents of Birch class pupils, they are going to have the opportunity to learn Spanish, and for the time being will not be doing either French or German. As with the new approach to languages in lower school, Birch will have greater immersion in the chosen language than has previously been the case. Coincidentally, Birch class also has the benefit of having a Spanish boy joining the class for a year!

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Zoe Bett is our new part-time Upper School maths teacher, working with Birch and Elder classes

Sonja Burnett is our new part-time Science teacher, teaching Biology, Chemistry and ICT to the Upper School classes.

Doña Olivia from Spain, is with us for the next half term, possibly longer, and during this time will be teaching Spanish to Birch class, a week of maths main lesson to Oak class and working on a range of other things with older school children.

Welcome to Olivia, Sonja and Zoe!

MOBILE PHONES

Mobile phones are creeping into the school. This is not just confined to the older classes, as we have increasingly been seeing ever younger children coming in with them. During the past year it has been our policy for pupils who bring phones in to put them in a drawer in Carol's office at the start of the day, and collect them before they go home. We have reviewed the situation this summer and have decided to implement a new policy and corresponding set of rules regarding mobile phones. This policy will come into effect as from the first day of term, 8th September 2014.

We feel it necessary to take a strong position on the use of mobile phones in the school at this stage. Mobile phones have the potential to be harmful if misused in the school environment and our priority is to ensure the pupils feel safe. There is also the issue of peer pressure. We have noted as the year has progressed, that among some of the younger classes it seemed to be something of status symbol to have to go to Carol's office to hand in or collect one's phone.

Our position is this: Pupils do not need mobile phones during the School day and so they should not be brought to school. However, we accept that there are instances where a child will need to have a phone with them as part of their support system for getting to and from school. Therefore, if a pupil brings a phone into school, it must be at the parents' (and pupil's) own risk and the school cannot take any responsibility for the phone. Any phone brought into school must be kept in the child's bag, out of sight and turned off.

If, however, a pupil breaches the rule of keeping the phone turned off and out of sight in their school bag, and is seen using a mobile phone in school for any purpose (texting, speaking, emailing, internet, photography) without express permission from a teacher to do so, there will be a rigorous consequence. The policy and rules apply to all students on the school premises between 8.30am and 4pm. Therefore, pupils should understand, for example, that if they are in the playground or corridors at 3.40pm and they use their mobile phone, they are in breach of rules.

If this should happen, a standard letter will be sent home to parents to inform them that a breach in rules has occurred. If three such letters go home during the course of an academic year, parents will be requested to attend a meeting at school to discuss sanctions that will be applied to the pupil concerned, including possible temporary exclusion.

We ask for parents support in implementing and upholding this policy.

CLASSROOM CHANGES

True to the school's tradition, every two years the classes move one step further on their journey through the school building. For those who are new to the school and may not yet have experienced this tradition, the children who are younger than 6 start in kindergarten, downstairs in the west wing of the building. When they reach class 1 age they move upstairs to the room directly above kindergarten. Every two years thereafter, they move one classroom along, gradually heading toward the eastern end of the building upstairs. When they reach upper school

age (in this school this is when a combined class becomes a class 8/9) they come back downstairs and move from east to west, finally arriving, as have Elder class, in the classroom adjacent to the kindergarten. In this way, over the course of their years in the school, if they go the whole way through, they will travel a complete circle around the building.

Classes are identified by the name of a tree; an identity that stays with them throughout their time in the school.

The only problem we have found with this system is that we get used to referring to rooms by their class name, so that when the class moves on the room name also has to change, and it takes a bit of time to adjust!

So this year, the Kindergarten gate has been moved along and Elder class (class 10/11) are in the room next to kindergarten (which used to be called the Maple room). Birch have moved into Elder's old classroom, Oak into Birch's old room, Willow into Oak's old room, Sequoia into Willow's old room and finally the vacated room will be occupied by the new class one, consisting of children from Chestnut kindergarten. This new class 1 will be called Maple class and will be taught by Mrs Higgins.

THE STEINER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

It has been a very busy summer for getting organised for the historic occasion that is upon us, which is the first year of being able to offer the new and accredited school leaving qualification - the Steiner School Certificate (SSC). The whole year for the oldest class (Elder) is now mapped out, as is required by the quality standards of the

New Zealand Federation, which oversees and moderates the qualification.

This has been no mean feat and all credit to Jeff for achieving the coordination of this with all the teachers who will be involved in delivering the SSC over the course of the year.

We will be providing updates on the SSC as we go. It is going to be quite a year as we navigate our way through delivery of this ingeniously designed and rigorous qualification.

FULL DAYS OF SCHOOL

The school provides full time education for all children. However, with the younger classes, we provide the option for parents who choose to, to take their children out of school on one or more afternoons of the week.

The school's position is that prefers children to stay in school all day for the whole week, as the curriculum and timetable is adapted to allow for the fact that younger children need more time to play and 'breathe out', whereas the older children need more challenges and varied activities.

For the coming academic year, days of the week when children may be taken home at either 1pm or 2pm are as follows:

Maple - Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Sequoia - Wednesday and Friday

Pupils in Willow, Oak, Birch and Elder classes are all expected to be in school five full days a week.