

# *The Children's Garden*

Steiner Kindergarten



## **PARENT AND CHILD GROUP**

For children from birth to 3 1/2 years and their carers

Dear Parents,

Our Parent and child groups aim to provide the very young child with a safe and calm place to play and explore, that will support the discovering and mastering of their own physical body, while also supporting and nourishing parents in their relationship to their child and their parenting.

The same thought and expectations are at the heart of both our indoor sessions, for the younger child and our outdoor sessions, for the older child

A key component of our sessions is observation time. Our times for careful observation are inspired by the Hungarian pediatrician Emmi Pikler. Many of Rudolf Steiner's indications for the healthy development of babies and the young child before three, connect beautifully with the Pikler approach. This precious time of observation gives parents the opportunity to appreciate and understand their child's unique individuality.

Through our sessions, PARENTS:

- Will develop a basic trust that their child is able to take initiative and can learn through self-motivation.
- Will enjoy witnessing their child's progression through the various stages of development and acquire a clearer understanding of what to expect at each stage
- Will gently come to harmonise the needs of their child with their own needs
- Will witness situations where questions will arise, as "at what point should the adult step in and interfere during the child's play/activity, and, perhaps more importantly, when should the adult just NOT interfere?"
- Will see the value of setting clear and consistent boundaries and verbalising expectations throughout the process of developing discipline

Through their love of their child, parents will get to recognise the authenticity of their child through both their dependency and their individuality.

What could Parent and Child group mean to your CHILD?

- A safe space for them to explore and discover
- To be allowed to follow one's own initiative
- A place to meet other children
- The opportunity to discover what they can and cannot 'quite' do

- Coming into contact with different play materials and climbing objects, thus allowing them to increase their range of movement
- Experiencing themselves in a space where (almost!) everything is allowed
- A time to feel their parent's total presence and undivided, quiet attention

What do we expect of parents?

- To observe quietly (while still remaining yourself!) while sitting down, to give your own child attention if he/she needs it, and to fully be there for him/her
- To give your child the confidence and space for him/her to explore and experiment
- During our sessions, parents are to follow the child's initiative. Playing together, amusing, encouraging, stimulating belong at home.
- But please, do react to your child if he/she asks for that
- To maintain an open and non-judgemental attitude
- To enjoy your child in a relaxed manner
- To tell me if there is anything that bothers you or if you have any questions regarding your child
- If a crisis arises next to you and the group leader is unaware, preferably call her or step in yourself, as we are all responsible for what happens in our group.
- Please switch off your mobile phone or put it on silent.
- Please do not take photographs unless arranged with the group leader

What can you expect from the group leader?

- To facilitate and accompany the group
- To provide an environment safe and appropriate for the age group
- To step in when necessary and help resolving conflicts
- To console the child if he/she will accept it, otherwise the parent is here to console their child whenever necessary
- To be there to answer your questions

## PRACTICAL POINTS

Please try and come on time

If you cannot come to one of the sessions, please let me know beforehand if possible, by calling kindergarten on 020 8948 2959 or emailing me on [regine.childrengarden@hotmail.com](mailto:regine.childrengarden@hotmail.com)

Please come as one parent per child in order to keep a calmer atmosphere for the children.

If another parent, grandparent or carer accompanies your child, please let them know beforehand what to expect and our 'rules'. I will also try to brief them on arrival.

The person who accompanies your child to our group is responsible for him/her.

## RHYTHM OF THE SESSION

Rhythm helps the child feel safe and happy, as he/she learns to know what is to come. Therefore, our sessions will generally follow the same pattern: playtime (about 1 hour) followed by tidy up time, a small snack and a few songs.

## ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS AND IMITATION

From time to time, an activity might be offered to parents. Please do not expect or invite your child to join the activities. At this young age, it is more enriching for your child to be playing and exploring. The young child learns about the world through imitating what people around him/her are doing. Your child might follow you to the activity, have a look at what you are doing and go back to his play.

## EATING/DRINKING

Children will sit with their parents sitting behind them. After singing a grace for our meal, a small snack, fresh fruit and camomile tea will be served. No need to bring any food, we will provide it.

## CLOTHING

### Indoor sessions:

the chapel has under floor heating, but comfortable and warm clothing for your children is a must (also for yourself, as you will be sitting still)

We prefer to see children barefoot during the whole of playtime as it is good for the development of their feet and it minimises the risk of slipping on the floor

As the snack area is tiled and might be cold (despite the carpet), you are welcome to put socks or slippers on your child at the end of playtime, just before snack.

Please bring extra socks or slippers for yourself.

### Outdoor sessions:

Children will be playing in the front garden (sandpit, playhouse, climbing, etc). As we will not be able to use the chapel on those afternoons, please make sure your child (and yourself!) is dressed accordingly (sun hat, raincoat, be prepared for all weather) as we will be staying out for the whole session. There will be access to the toilets only.

## THE WAY OUR PARENT AND CHILD GROUPS RUN BEST

We unfortunately have no indoor space for pushchairs and they will have to be left outside.

On arrival, please leave your shoes and coats in the entrance hall.

On arrival, please put any cuddly toy or dummy in your handbag as well as any food, which your child might still have in his/her hand.

Please remember to turn off your mobile phone.

Your bag may be left in the playroom, underneath the table in the right hand side corner of the room. This way you will not have to leave the room unnecessarily. Please do not take your bag to where you are sitting.

Find a place/cushion for yourself and your child. This will remain the place during playtime, where your child can be with you and find you easily if she/ he needs you. Take some time to make sure both of you are comfortable.

The children will then start to explore and play out of their own initiative while parents can observe.

If at any time you have to leave the playroom, please make me aware of it so that I can watch over your child and support him/her if he/she gets upset.

After one hour of play, I will start tidying the toys. Children might help out of imitation, but they do not have to. It is best if parents remain sitting at that time to keep a calm mood.

After tidying up, we will prepare the snack table and children will be invited to sit down for snack time. The main rules are that 'we eat at the table only'. Even though this is our 'together time', some children might find sitting for more than a few minutes at the table, too demanding. They are welcome to leave the table, but they cannot leave the table with food in their hand.

Following our snack time, we will gather on the floor and sing a couple of songs before saying goodbye. It is very helpful if your child can sit on your lap or just in front of you for this time. Children do not have to sit for this and are welcome to carry on with their playing while parents are joining in with the singing.

When leaving, please make sure you are with your child at all times as sometimes parents might leave the front gate opened by accident.

I hope you and your child will enjoy your time with us.  
Regine Charriere