

The children's Garden

A Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten

PARENTS' HANDBOOK

WELCOME

Welcome to the Children's Garden – a small, independent Steiner-Waldorf kindergarten.

We have been established since 1998 and are currently located at The Woodville Centre, Woodville Road, Ham TW10 77QW (020 8948 2959).

The kindergarten started from very small beginnings when three parents (Emma, Mariette and Saba), deploring the absence of a Steiner kindergarten in West London, decided to form their own. Much is owed to the hard work and dedication of these three individuals, who became our first directors and who went a long way in building up the kindergarten from a small parent-led initiative to a fully recognised and registered nursery.



After the first year, during which time The Children's Garden had found a temporary home in a relative's attic, our kindergarten teacher moved to Canada and Régine Charrière was appointed. Later on, we were able to move into Grove Gardens Chapel, where we stayed for a couple of years before moving to St Margaret's. It was there that the kindergarten gained a real foothold in the community and that a good working relationship with the local education authority was established.

When our lease in St Margarets ran out we were lucky to be able to move back into Grove Gardens Chapel. In January 2021 we moved to new premises in Ham.

Our kindergarten teacher is Régine Charrière (Foundation degree in Steiner Waldorf Early Years Education; London Steiner Waldorf Early Years teaching Level 5 Diploma), and our assistants are:

Rasa Pociute (Diploma in pre-school education; Cache Level 3 Diploma in Holistic Baby and Child Care – Early Years Educator), and Natalie Nesbitt (Kindergarten and Class teacher Steiner Waaldorf diplomas)

Our aim in creating this document is to provide parents with detailed information about the kindergarten, its organisation and the philosophy on which it is based. It is our hope that it will contribute to forming a bridge between kindergarten and the home.

STEINER WALDORF EDUCATION

We are recognised by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship as a kindergarten and follow the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Steiner education is based on an understanding of the relevance of the different phases of child development. In Steiner education, like in many mainstream schools in Continental Europe, formal learning of the three R's does not begin before the child's seventh year in the belief that a child will learn these skills more effectively if he/she has had plenty of time and opportunity to first develop socially, emotionally and physically in a creative, secure and harmonious environment.

Until then children attend kindergarten where they can follow their natural impulse to learn by imitation and where they are given ample time and space for creative free play. Play is always child-led and teachers act as facilitators rather than initiators of play. During play children develop many practical, social and imaginative faculties. Periods of free play (both indoors and outdoors)

alternate with more structured activities, such as story time, ring games and snack time. The kindergarten rhythm allows children to develop at their own pace and find out about themselves as social beings. Being in a group of mixed ages (from 3 to 6) helps younger children to develop by following the example of the older ones and enables older children to learn to be caring and considerate.



As a Steiner kindergarten we take great care in catering for the sensitive nature of the very young child by creating an environment that is warm, harmonious and home-like. Toys, craft materials and furniture are made from natural materials and harsh colours and sharp corners are avoided. Toys are tactile and kept as simple as possible to leave room for imaginative play. Daily outdoors play enables the children to come into close contact with nature, to observe wildlife at close quarters and to develop a sense of the changing seasons.

Steiner education works for all children irrespective of academic ability, class, ethnicity or religion and takes account of the needs of the whole child, including his/her soul qualities. It is never just about imparting knowledge. Instead we seek to inspire the children and help them in finding things out for themselves. It is our aim to instil a life-long love of learning in the small child. Artistic activity plays an important part in Steiner education from kindergarten through to the Upper School as it stimulates the imagination and enables children to express themselves on an emotional level.

We have a small range of books to lend if parents would like to find out more about Steiner philosophy.

THE STATUTORY EYFS AND EXEMPTIONS

The Statutory **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** Birth – 5 years, applies to all settings including ours. It sets out both learning and development requirements and safeguarding and welfare requirements for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. You can find out more about the EYFS in the *Guide to the EYFS in Steiner Kindergartens* which you will find in your kindergarten or on



<http://www.steinerwaldorf.org>. You can also find a *parent's guide to the EYFS* on the government website <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk>. Because there are areas which conflict with the Steiner Waldorf early childhood principles and practice, we have received some 'Exemptions and Modifications' to the EYFS Learning and Development requirements and Assessment regulations under the 'Established Principles' route. These are mostly to do with the introduction and in some cases formal teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and use of IT/media and electronic gadgetry. There is no exemption from the safeguarding and welfare requirements. (See list of *Exemptions and Modifications* in the kindergarten).

LEGAL STRUCTURE

The kindergarten is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Its legal framework is laid down in its Memorandum and Articles of Association as well as in its in-house Constitution. Both documents are kept in the library and can be viewed upon request.

The kindergarten is registered with the Early Years Partnership and Ofsted and recognised by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN RUNNING THE KINDERGARTEN?

The School Governance Team is made up of the Trustees/Directors, who are not employees of the kindergarten. They hire the staff and make long-term decisions and their main duty is to ensure that the kindergarten meets its objective as laid down in its Constitution as well as all legal requirements. Current members of this team are Ben McQuillan, Ruth Hardy and Francis Clegg.

We have one qualified kindergarten teacher who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the kindergarten and the development and delivery of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. She makes all pedagogical decisions and works closely with her two assistants with whom she holds weekly pedagogical meetings.

The Management Team deals with the day-to-day running of the kindergarten and takes medium-term decisions. In addition, it oversees the work done by the School Support Teams and acts on the feedback it receives from the School Support Teams. It meets on a weekly basis and its current members are Régine Charrière and Birgit Möller.

The School Support Teams are in charge of various areas of the non-pedagogical running of the school. These include administration and finance, maintenance, fundraising, premises, publicity and social events. They are made up of parents and friends of the school. In some instances, professionals are hired, for example accountants or solicitors, but usually these tasks are unpaid. They make short-term decisions relevant to their teams in close consultation with the teacher and the Management Team.



The School Association meets once a term and includes everyone interested and involved in the kindergarten. The Association is interested in and wants the best outcome for the whole of the kindergarten and receives updates from each team during its meetings. It appoints the members of the School Governance Team by voting. All parents and staff automatically become members of the Association on joining the kindergarten, but have the option to withdraw from it.

THE DAILY ROUTINE

Rhythm and routine are fundamental to life in the kindergarten. The child finds security and safety in the repeating rhythm and structure of the mornings.

Our days start with outdoor play in our garden, giving all the opportunity to run, climb, swing, hide, build dens, explore, garden, etc.



During ring-time the children join in seasonal songs and verses, finger plays and traditional ring-games.

Lunch provides a time to establish sound social habits: preparing the table, waiting until everybody is ready, saying grace before eating and a thank you at the end. The food served is wholesome and as much as possible organic.

Each day has an associated activity, for instance baking on Tuesday, painting on

Wednesday, craft on Thursday.

Children are welcome (but not required) to join in the daily activities, such as baking bread, chopping vegetables or painting. They can play alone or in groups using all materials available in the kindergarten (indoors and/or in the garden).

Tidying time is initiated by the adults, who are quickly joined by the children, returning everything to its rightful place, so that play can begin again the following day.

Story time provides the children with rich and beautiful oral language experiences, offering them a wonderful foundation for the language work that comes later in their educational journey.

FESTIVALS

The Steiner curriculum is non-denominational and respects the individual beliefs of families. Children of any ethnic or religious background are welcomed to our kindergarten. Seasonal festivals serve to connect humanity with the rhythms of nature and the cosmos.



In kindergarten, the celebration of festivals helps the children to foster a sense of the seasons, the rhythm of the year and a natural reverence for the wonder and beauty of life and nature. The children are actively involved in the preparations for each celebration through activities, songs, rhymes and stories, and parents are invited to join in a festival each term.

The main festivals celebrated in kindergarten are Michaelmas/Harvest, Martinmas, Advent, Christmas, Easter, Whitsun and St. John's Day. Families are also welcome to bring their own festivals to kindergarten. In previous years our celebrations have included Chinese New Year, the Birth of Buddha, Eid and Yom Kippur.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are a very special occasion in the kindergarten. Parents are invited to a special story in celebration of their child's fourth, fifth and sixth birthday. Siblings, grandparents or godparents are welcome to join us for that special time. Prior to the birthday, parents will have provided the teacher with the child's 'life story' (a few incidents which happened each year of his life), and which will be told upon his/her arrival.



Following the story, parents, children and teachers will share the birthday cake (please avoid sweets, Smarties, colouring, icing...fresh fruit are a very good decoration alternative). Through the birthday story, we celebrate the child, his/her interests and achievements, and aim to build up his/her self-esteem, self-respect and in turn, reverence for others.

EVENTS

The kindergarten community organises events for the whole family throughout the year, including parenting workshops, school fairs, barn dances, fruit picking trips and puppet shows. Some of these are of a purely social nature whilst others are designed to help raise funds for the kindergarten to finance specific projects.

COMMUNICATION

It is our aim to ensure the welfare and happiness of your child at all times. This is achieved by working together in close partnership. If you have any concerns about your child or if there is anything at home which may be unsettling them, please discuss this with your teacher.

Day-to-day concerns can be communicated between parents and teacher through short conversations at pick-up time, email or a phone call. Please try not to approach the teacher at the beginning of the morning unless you need to impart essential information regarding your child as the teacher should give the children her full attention at this time.

For more general discussions on the overall development of your child the teacher is available to speak to you by arrangement on designated surgery days. On all other matters please try to contact the teacher by e-mail on regine.childrensgarden@gmail.com.



Telephone calls to the teacher's home number should only be made in cases of emergency and no later than 8.30pm.

Parent contacts liaise between teaching staff and parents, offer help and encourage parents to get involved in Festival preparation, maintenance mornings, Advent Fair, fund raising and

social gatherings. A parents' telephone tree enables us to contact each other.

PARENTS EVENINGS

Parents evenings are generally held each term and provide an important opportunity for parents to come together and learn about Steiner education, the daily rhythm of the

kindergarten, crafts and activities of the season, up-coming festivals, child development as well as the social dynamic and development of the group. Most parents evenings will also offer the chance of experiencing a practical aspect of kindergarten life. Parent attendance of these evenings is important for the child as they help parents develop a deeper understanding of life in the kindergarten and share that aspect of their life more fully with them. Last but not least there is an important social aspect to these occasions in that they help build a circle of loving adults around the children.

Please make every effort to attend the parents' evenings.

Parents' evenings are designed to discuss the group as a whole. If you would like to discuss your child's individual progress, please make a 'surgery' appointment. Please also note that parents' evenings are dedicated to the educational aspects of the kindergarten. All other matters should be discussed in separate meetings.



WHAT TO BRING FOR YOUR CHILD

Your child will need the following items, which are to be left in kindergarten:

- a plain pair of indoor shoes/slippers with covered toes and heels, no slip-on allowed
- a pair of rubber boots with welly warmers for winter
- a complete change of clothes suitable for the season (a bag will be provided)
- bib-and-brace waterproof trousers
- waterproof hooded fleece lined jacket
- waterproof gloves and warm hat
- light cotton sun-hat and sun cream during the summer.
- please make sure your child wears clothes and shoes they can manage with minimum help
- avoiding belts, tight buttons, bows, will allow your child to go to the toilet independently.

Your children's clothes and shoes must be plain, simple, colourful, appropriate for indoor and outdoor play. Inappropriate clothing would include black garments and clothing showing slogans, advertising or commercial images. No Spiderman, Bob the Builder, Barbie, flashing lights, etc. (the same applies for school bags, lunch boxes and shoes). Garments should fit well for warmth and safety reasons and should be made of natural fibres where possible.

Please do not bring toys from home to kindergarten except during your child's settling first weeks, when it might help him/her transition from home to kindergarten.

Food must not be brought into kindergarten (we also have a strict 'No Nut' policy), except for medical reasons and by arrangement with the teacher.

TELEVISION AND COMPUTERS

Television and characters from television play a large part in the life of most children in modern day society. Children up to the age of seven learn by imitating and therefore, television watching is actually contrary to the developmental approach taken by Steiner schools and kindergartens. Television is a passive occupation and pre-school children need to be active and participating in activities directly in order to learn. It also diminishes the opportunity for social interaction with others.

The young child does not have the life experiences to make sense of the images they watch and adopting superheroes as role models from a young age is not beneficial to the developing mind as it provides stylised models of behaviour and inhibits social development that is dependent on the example of others.

We would advise as little television watching as possible and certainly not every day. If you feel your child must watch television then please ensure the material is suitable, i.e. no superheroes or violence, and that it is age appropriate.

Please be aware that time spent in front of a computer should also be monitored and kept to a minimum (10-15 minutes at a time) as we believe that using computers/watching television causes chronic disorganising of the child's vulnerable growing senses and is detrimental to whole child development. The development of emotional literacy depends on warm relationships with real people who care for them; secondary experience blurs the distinction between what is and what is not real; fixed images reduce the possibilities of developing mental pictures and the development of imagination.

https://ableprod.blob.core.windows.net/apps/zm/pdfs/live_streaming_ebooklet.pdf



PARENT AND CHILD GROUP



Our Parent and child group aims 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.

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.

This year, our group will run on Fridays from 10am to 11.30pm.

WHAT WE EXPECT OF PARENTS:

1. That they work towards understanding the principles which lie behind Steiner Waldorf education so that they know what they have chosen for their child and can give the teachers whole-hearted support in their work.
2. That they ensure their child comes to school regularly and arrives punctually every day.
3. That they arrive in good time to meet their child at the end of the kindergarten morning and leave the premises promptly unless they have a legitimate reason for being at kindergarten and that they supervise their child.
4. That their child comes to kindergarten dressed in suitable clothes for the weather and for the activities and play of the kindergarten day and that he/she has had enough sleep.
5. That they are open and honest in their communication with the teachers about their child's health, family circumstances and anything else which may affect his/her behaviour.
6. That they limit their child's exposure to television, videos, DVD's, computer games and cinema according to the child's age remembering that it would be of great benefit to the child if he/she was kept away from them entirely.
7. That they meet their financial commitments to the kindergarten in full and on time. Any financial difficulties should be discussed with the Administrator.
8. That they familiarise themselves with the kindergarten's policies and procedures and, by respecting and following them, help with the smooth running of the kindergarten.
9. That they attend our termly Parents' Evening and Association Meetings.



10. That they help in the running of the kindergarten through joining one of the School Support Teams (Fundraising, Social Events, Premises, Publicity etc.) and helping with the weekly washing and cleaning (rota system).

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Our policies and procedures are kept in a Blue File in the entrance hall and are available for parents to look at all times. These include Safeguarding and Child Protection, SEN, EAL, behaviour, anti-bullying, the use of physical restraint, Health and Safety, Risk Assessment, and Outing policies.

Here is a summary of the most important ones:



TERMS OF ADMISSION

It is our intention to make our setting accessible to children and families from all sections of the local community. We aim to ensure that all sections of our community have access to the setting through open, fair and clearly communicated procedures.

Children are admitted once they have turned three years of age. Admission is by application form and subject to availability of places.

If there are no vacancies, the child's name will be placed on the waiting list. Admission is by order of application though priority is given to siblings and to children coming up from the Children's Garden's parent and child group. If a full time place becomes available we would seek to fill it with another full time child.

FEES

All fees are due by the date on the invoice, normally one week before the beginning of term. All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to the Early Education Funding. The amount is calculated by the Local Education Authority and paid directly to the kindergarten. The entitlement is given in the term following the child turning 3.

A maximum of 15 hours of basic nursery care are provided free of charge for all 3 and 4-year-olds in compliance with the Government's Code of Practice. Fees are charged for extra hours and additional services that form part of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. 5 and 6-year-olds pay fees for all hours attended.

It is essential for the effective running of the kindergarten that fees are received on time and parents are expected to honour their financial commitments to the kindergarten without the need of reminders. Payments that are received more than two weeks after the due date incur

a surcharge of 2.5% and a surcharge of 5% is added to all payments that reach us more than four weeks after the due date.

Please note that we require one term's notice in writing of termination of a child's place, otherwise a full term's fees (including any Early Education Funding we may not be able to claim as a result of the child being withdrawn) will be charged and the deposit will not be returned.

If your child's place can be given to another child immediately, then only the deposit will be retained.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Kindergarten days and times are Mondays to Fridays from 9.30am to 3.30pm, with an option to collect at the earlier time of 1.30pm. Please note that the door will be locked at 9.45am each day. Please let your teacher know by 9.15am if your child is unable to attend or if you will be late. The kindergarten telephone number is 020 8948 2959.



It is important for the smooth running of kindergarten that parents are punctual. Please ensure that your child arrives on time as it is very disruptive for the whole group when a child arrives late and unsettling for the child him/herself, especially if it happens repeatedly.

We also expect parents to pick their child up on time.

Parents who arrive more than 15mn late when picking up their child, will be charged for an extra half hour and parents who are more than 30 minutes late will need to pay for an extra hour.

Part-time places (12 hours a week) are available for 3-year-olds to help them settle into kindergarten. Once children turn 4, we expect them to attend a minimum of 18 hours a week. This enable them to fully integrate into the group and ensures they do not miss out on any activities.

BRINGING AND COLLECTING CHILDREN

Children must be collected by a parent or by a named person with parental consent. If your child is going home with someone other than you, please let the teacher know in the morning by filling in the list on the door.

Parents are responsible for their children whilst they are on the premises at drop-off and pick-up time.

CHILD PROTECTION

The kindergarten is concerned with the physical, emotional and spiritual safety and well-being of all children, and works to create an environment in which children feel secure,

valued, respected, listened to and taken seriously.

The Children Act of 2006 places a clear and additional legal responsibility upon schools to ensure that they work together with other agencies to safeguard and promote children's welfare.

As a result, if concerns are raised within the kindergarten, or a child or parent reports a situation involving possible abuse, it would not be possible to guarantee confidentiality. The matter would have to be referred to social services, in line with government policy, and suitable procedures followed to ensure prompt and effective help to children who are suspected of being abused or neglected.

Our Designated Teacher for Safeguarding and Child Protection (Régine Charrière) is available to talk to you about any aspect of the school's policy, and discuss any individual concerns. A full copy of the Child Protection Policy and procedure and other relevant documentation are available for reference in our Blue File.

Contact Numbers:

Kindergarten:	020-8948 2959
Designated teacher for Child Protection Régine Charrière:	020-8968 4605
Designated Trustee for Safeguarding Ruth Hardy	07938 898 921
Richmond Single Point of Access (SPA) (for out of hours/weekends)	020 8547 5008 020 8770 5000
Childline – a national helpline for children; calls are free	0800-1111

DISCIPLINE

It is our aim to create an environment where children can develop self-discipline and self-esteem in an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement. Positive methods of guidance are used, redirecting the children in a gentle and firm way. For further information, please refer to our Guidelines for Supporting Positive Behaviour in the Kindergarten (Parents Book of Policies).



If a child is causing concern this will be discussed with the parents and we will work with the parents to resolve this. Occasionally it may be necessary to call in outside specialists to assess a child; this will be done with parental consent.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

As teachers and parents in this kindergarten, we aim to provide an appropriate education for all, regardless of race, colour, disability, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, sexual



orientation or marital status. We recognise and value the diversity of children's, parents' and teachers' backgrounds. Through the school's ethos, structure and curriculum, we seek to prepare all children so that they can develop a positive self-worth, direct their own lives and learn to value and respect differences in others in a multi-cultural and multi-racial society. For further information please consult our Equal Opportunities Policy in the Parents Book of Policies.

FIRST AID

Minor accidents are dealt with in the kindergarten. Accidents are recorded and parents informed of the measures taken to ensure the wellbeing of the child. The certified first aiders are Régine Charrière and Rasa Pociute.

ILLNESS AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Please do not bring your child if they are at all unwell. If your child has suffered from diarrhoea or a high temperature please keep him/her at home for another 24 hours after symptoms have gone. Please keep the teacher informed on a daily basis whilst your child is unable to return to kindergarten by calling the kindergarten on 020 8948 2959, before 9.30am.

PARENTS' COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If you have a concern please raise this as soon as possible with the relevant person. If the concern is not dealt with to your satisfaction please follow our complaints procedure (see *Policy and Procedure for Dealing with Parents Concerns* in our Book of Policies) and make a formal complaint in writing or by email.

SMOKING

It is against the law to smoke on the kindergarten premises, including our front garden.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

In keeping with the principles of Steiner-Waldorf education, we consider all children as having individual needs and aim to meet those needs as best as possible taking into consideration the child's age, developmental stage, and other circumstances.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities, like any other child, will be considered for admission on an individual basis. This will involve full discussion of a child's needs with the parents/guardians, and where appropriate other involved professionals, including consideration of practical and resource constraints. A thorough assessment of the child's needs, will allow us to cater and support the child in order for him/her to participate as fully as possible in all activities.

OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Contemporary life puts children under increasing pressure to grow up as quickly as possible. Despite current research which shows that children pressurised into early learning suffer from high levels of anxiety and stress, sleep problems and low self-esteem, the drive towards fast-tracking children through childhood continues.

The aim of the kindergarten is to allow the children to learn through their imagination and imitative faculties and to develop their natural potential and confidence with a warm, secure and calm environment. In the kindergarten the child's innate willingness to learn is strengthened to become second nature, which lasts a life time.

In the home-like environment, simple domestic activities such as baking, cooking, cleaning, gardening and sewing encourage free imitation and support the life of the kindergarten. Such activities have strong social, practical, moral and educational basis and value. Their fulfilment provides a good example for the child, who absorbs and then reflects the moral and ethical actions and values of those around him. The emphasis on the kindergarten as a small community helps foster social skills and gives every child a sense of belonging. We welcome children of all cultural, racial, social and religious backgrounds. We strive to provide an education imbued with a fundamental respect for the individuality of each human being.

A wide range of artistic activities, with an emphasis upon creative play, will allow the children to explore creativity using all their senses. They will be able to explore colours through 'wet-on-wet' painting; sounds and words through playing with musical instruments and listening and joining in at ring time or story time; play with colour and shape while drawing or modelling with bees wax, and developing their body and sense of movement harmoniously, through both fine and gross motor gestures.

Through these varied experiences, both practical, artistic and through creative play, children have the opportunity to develop healthy emotional, social and physical skills, as well as fine listening, speaking and basic numeracy skills.

All healthy children love to play, and self-initiate play is a great natural teacher. Through their play, children gather knowledge and understanding and find situations where they can practise their developing competence. They also have the opportunity to develop interactive skills such as co-operation, empathy, intuition and the ability to see things from the perspective of the other. Our play equipment is made from natural and environmentally friendly raw materials.

During our sessions, children move freely from child-initiated activities to teacher-led activities. The role of the kindergarten teacher is to be a facilitator and a support for the children in their learning. In so doing, the teacher helps the child to grow independent and become personally responsible for 'managing' his or her own activities.

We aim to develop respect for the natural world and the environment through environmentally friendly practices for example, recycling where possible, and caring for the garden. We try wherever possible to serve organic food which is always freshly prepared and vegetarian.

