



# EARLY YEARS CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT & OBSERVATION POLICY

**DOCUMENT CONTROL**

**Version history**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author /Comments</b>
V1.0	12/2016	Andrew Poppa
V1.1	11/2018	Rachel Theobald

**Changes since last version**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Description</b>
V1.0	Yearly Review
V1.1	Yearly Review

**Reviewers**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Rachel Theobald	Early Years Coordinator
<b>Date of Next Review</b>	<b>November 2020</b>

**Issue control**

<b>Owner</b>	Lancaster Steiner School
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<b>Sign off Date</b>	14/11/2018

## EARLY YEARS CURRICULUM

### Principles

#### CREATIVE PLAY

At the heart of our curriculum is the belief that children need time and space to engage in creative play. The children have access to a wide variety of natural, open-ended, resources inside the Kindergarten and the morning session provides enough time for children to become truly immersed in play. Our outdoor space also has a wide variety of natural resources that encourage physical play and allow children to learn about safety and risks through activities such as climbing trees.

#### RHYTHM

Daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms underpin the curriculum in the early years. Set activities take place each day and are repeated every week. This repetition helps strengthen children's memory, has a settling effect whereby they know what will happen each day and develops confidence as children gradually master these repeated tasks during their time in Kindergarten. Ring time and story time involves repetition of dances and stories that build over a 2-3 week period. Again, this gives young children time to master and gain confidence when learning new tasks. Seasonal rhythms are also adhered to through the celebration of festivals (religious & natural) and allow the children to gain awareness that they are part of a larger community. All families are encouraged to attend festivals so that this sense of community and togetherness can be strengthened in the children. Significant days for the children are marked (e.g. Eid) allowing children to gain an awareness of diverse beliefs and to respect each other's differences.

#### LEARNING THROUGH IMITATION

At Lancaster Steiner School, Kindergarten children learn through imitation. The teacher provides a range of age suitable activities but does not compel the children to join in. Instead, it is recognised, in line with Steiner principles that young children learn best not when instructed verbally, but when they can willingly copy and engage their body. Young children are 'doers' and the curriculum reflects this providing lots of practical meaningful activities for children to engage in. For instance, regular daily activities include cooking, baking, painting and cleaning.

**AGE RELATED DIFFERENTIATION**

The Lancaster Steiner School recognises that Steiner Early Years Practice and the EYFS work very well together. Children who have moved beyond the age-related expectations of the EYFS have opportunities to challenge themselves through additional activities or will encouraged to work more independently on teacher-initiated tasks. For instance, when children enter the final year of Kindergarten they are given long term projects that involve real tools and may take months to complete (woodwork and weaving). The word which best characterises this type of learning would be 'will'. Children develop determination and the will to overcome adversity, and long projects which do not result in instant gratification are important to this. It is our belief that the strengthening of the will leaves children with the skills to persevere when they start formal learning in Class 1.

## Details of Work in Relation to EYFS Areas

### COMMUNICATION & LANGUAGE

Speaking and comprehension skills are developed through:

1. oral storytelling,
2. conversation at shared meal times,
3. singing during circle time,
4. The provision of stimulating resources that encourage imaginative play and communication between children.

### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Physical development is aided in three ways:

1. Gross motor skills develop through long periods spent in the garden with lots of resources that encourage balance, climbing, running etc. Dancing at circle time develops rhythmic movement. Large construction resources in Kindergarten allow for dynamic physical play.
2. Fine motor skills are developed everyday through the use of cutlery at snack time, chopping for cooking, and painting. Adult led crafts develop perseverance and nimble fingers through weaving, drilling, cutting and sticking. Appropriate drawing and writing implements are available to develop appropriate grips. Older children complete long term woodwork and weaving projects designed to test developing coordination and fine motor skills.
3. Children are encouraged to gain independence in hygiene and self care. We promote healthy eating and provide opportunities to do this through baking and food preparation. We put on waterproofs for the garden so children have opportunities to dress independently every day.

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Behaviour and confidence develop through the following:

1. Kindergarten's repetitive structure instils a sense of order and certainty in children. They settle well and can rely on events happening in a predictable way.
2. Compulsion is seldom used in Kindergarten, instead, children have a lot of autonomy to choose their own activities and play. This is facilitated by ample resources that account for different play styles both inside and outside.
3. Challenging adult led activities are planned which do not provide instant gratification. Children build confidence and skill through perseverance and deferred gratification.
4. Children learn to moderate their own behaviour through the consideration of the feelings of others. There are no forced apologies in Kindergarten, rather,

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the beginnings of restorative justice whereby, children have adult help in finding resolutions to conflict and are invited to devise their own ways of 'making things better'.

5. Children are given responsible jobs at snack times and meal times to develop personal responsibility and confidence.

### **MATHS**

Mathematical knowledge is developed in the following ways:

1. Counting games during ring time.
2. Children are given opportunities to count in meaningful contexts, eg, number of cups needed for snack time.
3. Shape, space and measure often forms part of adult led crafts, eg cutting shapes in lanterns for Martinmas.
4. Sorting occurs every tidy time as children put resources back in their correct areas.
5. Varied construction resources encourage mathematical concepts such measurement and shape.

### **READING & LITERACY**

Lancaster Steiner School has complete exemption from this area of the EYFS, however, practitioners have an awareness that children often want to engage in this area, therefore we provide the following:

1. A comfortable reading area with books easily accessible.
2. Oral Story telling promotes an interest in stories.
3. We stock paper and crayons for children to draw and write on.

### **KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

KUW is developed in the following ways:

1. Reverence and an understanding of nature is encouraged through seasonal ring times, story time and at each meal.
2. Gardening and growing our own plants and food gives children a practical insight into plants.
3. Our garden is large and children often find living creatures to observe and care for.
4. Tolerance, diversity and equality is celebrated during festivals, and acknowledging special days for all of the children.
5. Practical technology is introduced to the children in Kindergarten, eg, a wheat grinder that produces some of the flour we use for our bread.

## **EXPRESSIVE ART & DESIGN**

Creativity is one of the greatest gifts the young child has and we foster this in various ways:

1. A wide variety of open ended resources are provided both inside and out that develop imaginative play.
2. Children have considerable autonomy over their activities and adults are sensitive to their need to be absorbed in learning.
3. Songs and stories excite the imagination and are told repeatedly to make an impression on the children.
4. Crafts and artistic activities such as painting emphasise process over product and children are free to produce as much or little as they like when engaged.

## **LANCASTER STEINER SCHOOL EARLY CHILDHOOD OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES.**

Observation and assessment is an important part of good educational practice, and reflects the Steiner Waldorf philosophy and educational approach to viewing the child as a unique, active and developing human being. Good teaching practice occurs when the self-reflective teacher also regularly appraises and assesses his/her own teaching as well as the progress of each individual child, supported and affirmed by both colleagues and parents or carers of the child. Assessment for the very young child is based on the adult's knowledge of child development, and in line with statutory regulation, also has regard of the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children from birth to 5. It is related to long, medium and short-term Planning.

Lancaster Steiner School has a key person programme in place. The teacher is generally the key person for the morning sessions. The afternoon practitioner and assistants take the role of key person in the afternoon. Parents and carers are made aware of the name of their child's key person.

All key workers and practitioners make child observations and participate in assessments. Overall responsibility for compiling assessments, writing reports and meeting with parents/carers lies with the kindergarten teacher.

The regular assessment of each child's healthy and age appropriate development rests upon the following procedures:

### **INITIAL MEETING:**

On entry to the kindergarten, there is a meeting with parents to establish background information, including a brief biography forming a picture of the child.

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This is recorded and reference is made to the EYFS including questions relating to the EYFS PROGRESS CHECK (2-3 yrs) if applicable.

### **SHARED OBSERVATION:**

Adults in contact with the child on a daily basis observe their development and progress and make notes in the child's file or learning Journal. These on-going observations, photos, drawings, some activities and parent/carer contributions, as well as the child's own comments if applicable, contribute to the summative report. A child profile can also form part of the formative assessment process. Observations are based on the outcomes in the Steiner profile.

### **LEARNING JOURNEY**

The documents which demonstrate the child's learning journey are:

The Learning Journal – a book which contains observations of the child, photographs and pieces of work

The learning Journal celebrates the child's experiences and achievements through the year. This takes the form of notes, observations and actions taken by the staff in relation to the child's developmental milestones as well as planning to support their development in the kindergarten, with due regard to the others in the group, and the rhythm and routine of the day.

The Planning Folder – contains planning for all children with observations, actions and notes and deals primarily with formative assessment

The Child's File – contains the child's Steiner Profile, copies of reports and other documents and the learning journal.

### **END OF YEAR REPORTING FOR 3 AND 4 YEAR OLDS:**

The Steiner Profile is shared at the end of the year during a meeting with the parents/carers and this refers to EYFS assessments where appropriate. Parents will be asked to contribute, and suggestions may be made to support the child's learning and development in the home.

### **END OF YEAR REPORTING FOR 5 AND 6 YEAR OLDS:**

Lancaster Steiner School is exempt from the EY Profile.

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A report is written and given to parents when the child is 5. The areas of learning and development will reflect the Steiner profile and refer to the EYFS where appropriate.

### **END OF YEAR REPORTING FOR 6 YEAR OLDS:**

A summative report is written for the parents and also passed on to the child's next teacher or school. There is a celebration to mark the 'journey to school' and the child and parents will take home a portfolio which highlights the child's achievements during their time in the kindergarten and may contain drawings, paintings, photos and some examples of the child's work and a card or gift from the teacher/kindergarten.

### **CHILD STUDY:**

A more detailed study may be undertaken of individual children which is shared between all teaching staff. Parents are informed when this is taking place.

### **INCLUSION AND SEND:**

There may be times where the child may need extra support if there are questions around their learning and development, language support or in any other area.

These children also have provision mapping, whereby any extra support they need is documented.

If necessary, and IEP will be created in conjunction with the parents so that a shared plan for the child's progress can be enacted.

### **TRANSITION TO CLASS 1:**

All children moving on to their next teacher in school are presented by the KG teacher in a special College meeting. This presentation allows the next teacher to gain some insight of the child's stages of development and achievement.