

Moorland Waldorf Initiative School

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Curriculum Policy

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Introduction

MWI works with a curriculum based on the pedagogical insights of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner and on the experience of teachers who have worked with those insights in Steiner Schools worldwide. There are approximately 1,000 Steiner schools globally and over 50 in the UK and Ireland. Steiner's original curriculum indications have been successfully implemented for over 70 years and adapted to local conditions. We are committed to offering an education designed at every level to meet the needs of the pupils at their various stages of emotional, intellectual and physical development, whilst still adhering to clear underlying fundamental principles. We are committed to working with Steiner's developmental insights, which are contained in a series of books and lectures and which form on-going study material for the teachers in our school.

These insights affirm that:

1. Each child is a unique individuality with his or her own path in life
2. The teachers' aim to remove the obstacles to this path and to support the emerging human beings in our care in developing inner freedom within a healthily functioning body endowed with a rich and coherent feeling life, so as to enable them to make their contribution to society while at the same time unfolding their own human potential
3. A threefold methodology, recognizing different approaches in Early Years, based on imitation, Lower School, based on imagination, and Upper School, based on ideals, needs to be recognized (even though, at present, we do not have Upper School facilities at Botton)
4. Artistic rendering by the teacher of lesson content enables all pupils to access the subject offered with enthusiasm and understanding, regardless of ability
5. Lesson content needs to mirror the pupil's developmental stage. This requires knowledge of what lives within the children and constant flexibility, more so in a combined class situation where the age range of the children may be two years. The teacher can set expectations which are appropriate for the pupil's ability and developmental stage
6. Lesson content needs to be related back to the human being in a moral and inspiring manner
7. The pupils' motivation needs to arise from enthusiasm rather than ambition or fear
8. Education needs to address the development of thinking, feeling and the will as equal and integrated partners
9. Measurement of the pupil's progress against external and objective targets must take second place to an assessment of progress that takes into account the child's qualitative experience of life, school and self.

See British Values Statement

Kindergarten (Age 3 to 6)

The aim of the Kindergarten is to build a bridge between home and school by creating a safe, warm, and loving environment. This is to protect wonder and delight up to the age of seven. Teaching works with the children's will, through activity and through imitation. The morning follows a regular rhythm of an activity such as food preparation, bread making, painting or modeling, followed by creative play; then ring time (songs, rhymes and counting games,) followed by morning snack, outdoor play and story time. There is a seasonal rhythm, and festivals are celebrated through the year.

Main School (Age 7 to 14)

On entering Class 1 the children meet their class teacher, who ideally will stay with them until Class 8. This continuity of teacher for the first part of each day fosters security and respect in the children and brings the teachers to a deeper understanding of the needs of the individual child.

At age seven, and indeed for the next seven years, the children live very strongly in their feeling life. Although they can learn readily what appeals to their artistic sense, they are not yet ready to comprehend purely abstract concepts. Memory is therefore developed, especially through the sense of rhythm, and a strong foundation is given through material being presented, not intellectually, but in a living and pictorial way.

The Main Lesson

Throughout the eight years the school day begins with a two hour long Main Lesson taught by the class teacher. The Main Lesson is central to Steiner Education and is seen as an artistic and integrated whole. It is organized into subject blocks lasting between 3 and 5 weeks each. Each block begins a new topic, but, within the block, subjects may be interwoven. Each Main Lesson has several components, including practical, musical and artistic activities, movement and oral and written work. These multiple approaches aim to appeal to different learning styles and fully engage the child's thinking, feeling and willing.

Subject Lessons

In addition to Main Lessons regular practice lessons are given in English, Maths, Form Drawing and two Modern Foreign Languages. Practical subjects such as farming, building, cookery and gardening are experienced, and there are lessons in woodwork, modeling, handwork, craft, painting, drawing, eurhythm, religion and games. Music and drama play an important part in school life and classes regularly perform plays. Although singing and recorder playing form an integral part of Main Lesson, the children also have music and singing lessons. The children all play the recorder, and opportunities are available for learning to play a second instrument. They progress from a class orchestra lesson in Class 3/4 to a full orchestra involving all the children in the top two classes. We provide a balance of subject lessons, which include academic, artistic, crafts and physical activities that correspond to the soul faculties in all children with regard to their need to engage in thinking, feeling and will activities. The curriculum provides many opportunities in interdisciplinary ways of cultivating social awareness in age appropriate ways.

Class outings take place in connection with the main lesson subjects being taught, for example during farming, local geography, botany, geology, chemistry and astronomy main lessons. From Class 3/4 onwards, there is a main annual trip, which takes into consideration the development and age of the children.

Varying Needs

Our main aim is that all children who come to this school will be able to participate fully at the appropriate stage in the curriculum for their age and therefore for their development. The curriculum in itself is adaptable and fluid, and one of the advantages of continuity of class teacher is that children are able to work in such a way that particular needs can often be addressed by the class and subject teachers.

Differentiation is implemented by various methods in lessons in all subjects:

- Making use of the Steiner three fold strategies of imitation, storytelling (picturing) and thinking
- Each lesson having a multi-sensory approach; with visual, aural and kinaesthetic components
- Keeping a rhythmic and balanced lesson
- Ensuring a variety of activities – from listening to doing
- Ensuring a child-centred approach ie. responding to each child as an individual
- Allowing freedom of response to a lesson so that pupils can produce very different work to reflect what they have learned
- Ensuring there are tasks ranging from simple to complex, to allow for different abilities
- Using open-ended questions, so there is no wrong answer
- Sometimes explaining first and demonstrating afterwards, or demonstrating first and explaining afterwards – allows for different learning preferences
- Structuring work so that some pupils can be set lower or higher targets and then helped later on if necessary
- Grouping text on the blackboard in different colours for different groups of pupils to undertake appropriate tasks
- Encouraging the more able to help their peers
- Using recall, both at the end of the lesson and at the beginning of the next, to anchor information
- Each lesson containing different tasks; for example writing, listening, speaking, drawing, observation, dictation, reading, questioning. The content is differentially approachable.
- Encouraging discussion, exchange of news and reworking with others.

Each differentiation method is systematic, simple, inclusive and inductive. Each child is helped to contribute in his or her own way to the creation of the whole picture. However, we all recognise that many children in the context of their normal lessons will need an individual approach in particular areas of work and that at times an assistant will be needed in the classroom. We always try to have assistance for the Kindergarten teacher. We also try to keep up-to-date with relevant courses and publications.

Teachers and the SENCO are careful to monitor the children's progress and growth in self-confidence and there are times when a child will need a timetable to be adapted to allow for extra work, or for a different approach to work. This may be for a short or a long period of time. Help is usually given in a small group or on a one-to-one basis and takes place regularly. At times such help is offered within the context of a lesson but often the child or children will be withdrawn. When many needs are brought to our attention, we may have to prioritise.

In some cases children need support beyond that which we can offer. We are grateful to receive help from anthroposophical doctors, local doctors, educational psychologists, therapists and other professionals when appropriate. We are particularly aware of the need for children to make transitions to and from our school

with ease. However, we are not always able to tackle all the needs that are brought to our attention. Sometimes we have to suggest that help is sought elsewhere.

Reference

At MWI we specifically base our curriculum planning on that laid out by Martyn Rawson and Tobias Richter in ‘The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum’ (SWSF Publications, 2000, ISBN 1 900169 07 X). Botton School’s principal modifications are set out below. We are very conscious that within the Steiner Curriculum there is a great emphasis upon the autonomy of the class teacher to produce a curriculum informed by the setting, locality and particular pupils within their class. Therefore, how a topic is presented to one particular class by one particular teacher may be quite individual.

In a small Steiner School such as Botton it is common to have combined classes (ie double year groups, to create the best situation pedagogically, socially and economically) thus making it necessary to adapt the curriculum. Often in combined classes the subjects of the lower year group are taught in the Autumn term and the class moves gradually into the next year’s curriculum by the end of the academic year. It is important for the teacher to decide which main lesson topics are for the Autumn term and which are for the Spring and Summer terms. Discussions and planning takes place and is carried out 2 years in advance to aid organic development.

The curriculum laid out is primarily content, rather than skills, based. An outline of skills development can be found in Chapter 8 and further details and modifications can be found in individual teachers’ planning documentation.

Modifications to the curriculum as stated in ‘The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum’, which are specific to MWI. These are presented primarily as variations to the vertical curriculum, but they also impact on the horizontal curriculum as presented in the book.

Early Years curriculum modifications

1. The older children in Kindergarten are encouraged and expected to help with tasks, whereas the younger children are welcomed to help but not required.
2. It is expected that most 6 year olds are able to write their name in preparation for Class 1.
3. Songs, rhymes and little stories are told in foreign languages in Kindergarten. The language depends on the teacher. At the moment the children hear Swedish and occasionally French.
4. The Kindergarten teacher arrives before the children each morning to ensure materials are prepared but also that the right mood is created. An assistant meets the children in the centre of the village and walks with the children to Kindergarten to ensure they arrive in a suitable mood.
5. Following the morning snack, the children’s free play time takes place outside in the Kindergarten garden.

English curriculum modifications

Speaking and listening

1. The recitation of poems alternates with short musical exercises (singing or playing pentatonic flute [Class 1/2] moving onto recorder in Class 2/3)
2. All children should be able to participate in retelling a part of the story from the previous day. It would not necessarily be the case that the children would stand up in front of the class to do so.

3. A play is performed each year from Class 1/2, moving from choral speaking to children taking individual parts.
4. Project work is introduced in Class 3/4. The guidelines insist on dialogue taking place for research purposes. The children give brief oral presentations to the class, initially using notes, and this builds up to substantial oral presentations, with notes used only as prompts, for parents, teachers and other members of the school community by Class 7/8.

Writing

1. The teachers at MWI feel that it is important to teach each individual letter of the alphabet with a story and a picture and will designate the time to do this thoroughly.
2. Lower case letters are not introduced in Class 1. If the teacher decides to introduce lower case printed letters this would be in Class 1/2. Most teachers, however, decide to teach cursive handwriting to Class 2 children and not to teach how to write printed lower case letters. The children write with fat, coloured Lyra pencils. Fountain pens are introduced to all children in Class 3/4.
3. Dictations on a known subject may begin in Class 1/2 and develop throughout the classes.
4. Class 5/6 would make notes summarising a spoken presentation and write in different styles.
5. Class 6/7 would transform stories into play scripts and vice versa.

Grammar

1. Punctuation would be introduced to the children in Class 1/2 beginning with full stops and capital letters. The children in Class 2/3 would have an awareness of speech marks, commas, questions marks and exclamation marks and would begin to use them in their own compositions. Paragraphs would be introduced in Class 3/4. The children would understand and apply this knowledge by Class 5.
2. In Class 7 the children would be aware of poetic style, including rhythm and meter, eg' iambic pentameter and the ballad form. Poetry can be analysed in a sensitive way at this point
3. Class 6/7 would be familiar with use and meaning of the following figures of speech: simile, metaphor, image, analogy, proverb, aphorism, euphemism.
4. Class 6 would use reported speech.

Reading

1. The reading scheme which is used is Oxford Reading Tree. However, there are numerous graded books available for children to choose, as well as good quality picture books, high quality literature and factual books on a bookcase in the classroom. Often Class 2 children and above are encouraged to take books home and read to their parents or guardians, and notes about progress are written in a home/school book. The class teacher, and often parents, listens to Class 2 and Class 3 children reading on a weekly basis. In a combined Class 1/2, some Class 1 children may decide to read from the reading scheme.
2. Project work encourages children to read broadly, fiction and nonfiction, and to carry out research work. This begins in Class 3/4. The teacher advises on suitable sources such as text books, articles and internet use.
3. In Class 6 key works of literature would be recognised.
4. Narrative poetry is also studied in Class 7 eg. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

The check lists for literacy skills given for Classes 1-8 are applicable, taking into account the above variations and modifications.

Movement curriculum modifications:

All classes have separate timetabled movement lessons. Class 1 and 1/2 has one lesson per week. From Class 2/3 this increases to two lessons per week. In preparation for the Olympics in Class 4/5 more time may be given to running.

Swimming lessons usually take place in Class 3.

Rounders, or a similar game, may be introduced in Class 5.

Due to the size and location of the school opportunities rarely arrive to take part in tournaments.

A class trip in Class 6/7 usually involves water sports such as canoeing or kayaking, also climbing, abseiling, gorge scrambling and caving.

Gardening curriculum modifications:

Age appropriate gardening begins in Kindergarten. They have their own small garden plot which they care for, planting and harvesting. The school has raised beds, fruit trees and a compost area cared for mainly by classes 1-4. The classroom window sills are often used as a greenhouse for sowing and seedlings. Class 3 is particularly active. Class 5 and above extend their activities to include farming work, forestry work and general land management in Botton Village. All children help to harvest vegetables in the autumn for Botton Village. We agree and adhere to the points of view and general themes as stated in Rawson and Richter. How closely we are able to follow the curriculum for Class 7 and 8 depend on the expertise of the present staff and available opportunities.

Handwork and Craft curriculum modifications:

The teachers choose a selection of projects each year from the content suggestion list adhering to the points of view and general themes.

Woodwork modifications:

Woodwork as a discrete subject begins in Class 6. Projects include egg, spoon, bowl, stool and picture frame or mirror. Many tools are available in the woodwork /craft area including a green wood pole lathe.

Puppetry modifications:

Shadow puppets and marionettes are often made in Class 6/7. The children write and perform their own play scripts in connection with a geography project.

Clay modelling takes place in craft lessons in Class 4/5. Projects include animals evolving from a sphere or egg, thumb and coil pots. The curriculum is then followed up to Class 8 often in connection with certain main lesson themes such as Anatomy.

Cooking and Baking modifications:

This takes place from Kindergarten onwards. Some classes have specific timetabled lessons. Cooking often features in Maths, Foreign languages, History or Geography lessons or in project work. All classes are involved in preparing a Harvest Meal each year.

Geography curriculum modifications

The introduction to astronomy is carried out usually, in a conscious way, in Class 5. Stories connected to Greek Mythology aid this. However, opportunities to begin may arise during an over night class trip in Class 4.

By the end of a Class 7/8 the children will have covered the Class 7 curriculum as stated.

Environmental issues feature in discussions in Class 7 and form part of the guidelines for project work. Children are always provided with age appropriate guidelines for independent project work, which usually begins in Class 3/4.

Modern Foreign Languages curriculum modifications

The attainment targets presuppose 3 lessons per week in each language. (MFL has 2 lessons per week per MFL). Therefore the children do not complete the lower school curriculum. Although the methods of teaching stay true to the age/class of child, the children do not reach the attainment level of Class 8, especially regarding grammar, and would be working at Class 6 level. (Differentiation allows higher attainment levels for Gifted and Talented children.)

History curriculum modifications

In Class 7/8 we supplement consideration of the industrial revolution with the study of political revolution, usually placing emphasis on the French revolution. The ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity can be used as a focus for discussion of gradual, as well as revolutionary, change and as a means of linking to the idea of a threefold social order. The historical theme of the First World War and life in the trenches and the biography of Hitler and the rise of Nazism are not usually covered due to time limitations. The biographies of Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela may be touched upon briefly.

Social Skills curriculum modifications

We feel that it is important that many of the life skills topics as stated for Classes 9 -12 be introduced and discussed in an age appropriate way in Class 7/8.

As many of the children transfer into state school into year 9 or 10 we have identified certain aspects to help with this transition.

1. The introduction of a calculator in Class 5/6.
2. Reading comprehension practice. (To enable children to work with subject matter immediately rather than the following day.)
3. Study lessons. To develop the ability to work independently on individual work with individual targets in a focused, concentrated, organised, mature manner.
4. Acknowledgment of ICT and future impact on children, especially regarding competence in searching for information, saving and retrieval skills and e-safety.
5. Gradual build up of homework and personal organisational skills.

Music curriculum modifications

In addition to the curriculum in Rawson and Richter, the Kodaly method is introduced. The classes learn the Sol-fa, with gestures whilst singing, in Classes 1 and 2. In Class 3 this is introduced in stick notation. The children are not introduced to the violin within lessons but there are opportunities for children to have private music lessons.

The classes begin with one music lesson per week which incorporates singing and playing instruments. From Class 3 the lessons include study of music and an additional ½ hour singing lesson takes place. Classes sing as part of the morning routine. Two classes often meet together once per week to sing. In this way, in spite of classes being small, singing in 2 parts and singing in rounds can take place. The older children have the opportunity to join with the village choir to sing.

In addition, from Class 3/4 one class orchestra lesson takes place per week. The following year they join the next class, Class 6/7, and form a school orchestra, having one lesson per week. This increases when the children are rehearsing for the yearly concert.

The introduction to the bass clef takes place in Class 5 when different recorders are introduced.

Composing would occur in Class 6 and musical dictation is introduced in Class 5 and developed.

Due to the number of lessons per week the children are expected to reach a good standard in musical literacy and in instrumental playing.

Mathematics curriculum modifications

Pythagoras' Theorem (visually) and also Tessellation, content suggestions for Class 5 (p68,) are taught here in Class 6 (5/6 or 6/7, depending on the ages and ability of the class.) The value of Pi is taught in Class 6/7 and extended in Class 7/8. The application of Pythagoras' Theorem is saved for Class 7/8.

The construction of the pentagon and pentagram (p68) is in Class 7 (6/7 or 7/8) when teaching Phi, the Fibonacci Series and The Maths of Nature main lesson or component.

Social Skills, Classes 4-7 (pp203/204): In Class 6 (5/6 or 6/7) we have a main lesson, or component of a main lesson, usually entitled Money. Banking is part of this, including simple interest, profit and loss and discount. VAT is not taught here.

Banking (see also p69) is in Class 6, and we do not do double entry book -keeping but we do take a real situation and keep a record of income and expenditure. This may be in connection with a class trip. We give each member of Class 7/8 £5 and ask them to make at least £50 on their own or in a group ie pooling the money. We examine each other's progress.

We bring compound interest in Class 7/8, if at all, but give an example of how it works when we work with simple interest in Classes 6/7/8. Compound interest is kept for an extension lesson in Class 7/8 for a group rather than the whole class.

Literature is used in the Money component eg The Pardoner's Tale, The Merchant of Venice, A Christmas Carol.

We do not use simple interest as a way of introducing formulae (p69.) We usually use area, perimeter and $D=S \times T$ as starting points.

Class 6: from 'the four principle cases for congruency' to the end of the Geometry section would generally be included in Class 7 (6/7 or 7/8, depending upon the level of ability and the ages in the class.)

Class 7 Algebra could be in 6/7 or 7/8.

Most of Class 8 Algebra would only be reached, or partly reached, by an extension group in Class 7/8.

Conic Section (p 69:) We do not reach this with Class 7/8, and it is only covered if there is an extension lesson for the whole year with the most able pupils.

Caustic curves and envelopes of a cardioid (p69) are not taught in Class 6 but in 6/7 or 7/8 and sometimes in the 7/8 Physiology block.

In Class 7/8 there would be a revision of number systems eg base 60 and an introduction to the binary system.

Mean, mode and median could come in 6/7 or 7/8.

Quadratic equations (Content Suggestion for Class 9) are covered by Class 7/8 extension lessons but not taught generally.

The last three items listed under Geometry would be covered by a Class 7/8 extension lesson and not by all. Perspective exercises begin freehand but are also exacting, using set squares and rulers.

The Golden Mean, and its relation to the skeleton, comes in the component of a maths main lesson in Class 7/8 called The Maths of Nature. This links with History eg Leonardo da Vinci's biography. The Fibonacci Series and Phi, leaf transformations and life cycle of a wasp, spirals in shells etc can be looked at mathematically (Class 9 Geometry.) We think it important to introduce this in Class 7/8, in an age appropriate way, as it is so wonderful and there may not be another opportunity to learn it for many of our pupils.

We feel it is important to have a textbook for Mathematics in Classes 6-8 and feel that one lesson and one homework task each week at least are devoted to textbook work backed up by class lessons where necessary. This helps the children to keep records and to work systematically at their own pace.

Volume is taught in Class 6/7, practically, and sometimes extended in 7/8 for cube and cuboid. The volume of a cylinder is usually taught only in Class 7/8 extension lessons (Class 9).

Life Sciences (pp169/170): Some of this, eg minerals in the human body, can be covered in either Chemistry or Physiology blocks. In Botton School the science teacher and class teacher work together on this.

Physics and Chemistry curriculum modifications

In Botton School over many years we have established the teaching of Physics and Chemistry in 7 distinct blocks, usually each of 3 weeks.

These are:

Sound - end of Class 5/6 (1 block)

Heat and Light – Class 6/7 (2 blocks)

An Introduction to Chemistry through Combustion – Class 6/7 (1 block)

Electricity and Magnetism, Mechanics and Metals – Class 7/8 (3 blocks)

There is also some testing of food in Class 7/8 Physiology and a simple description of photosynthesis.

We closely relate Chemistry and Geology particularly with the study of limestone and alum (local connection.) We feel that best learning results if Geology closely follows Chemistry and not the other way round in Class 6/7. There is a caving trip in Class 6/7 and that reinforces the Geology and Science work.

We cover crystallising and the lime cycle (p92, Class 10) in an age appropriate way in Class 6/7.

Science lessons evolve within a relevant historical context, and literature, art, clear diagrams, succinct personal writing from observation, biographies and class trips are an intrinsic part of the science lessons.

Chemistry

Chemical symbols and formulae are introduced in Class 6/7 and extended in Class 7/8.

We reach the end of Class 7 Chemistry (pp90/91) in Class 7/8 and Organic Chemistry is taught whenever we have a Class 8/9.

In the Metals block in Class 7/8 we have an introduction to each of the Planetary Metals, the extraction of metals and their position in the Displacement Series.

Physics

Possible teaching Content for Class 8 (pp190-192)

We do not cover hydrostatics, hydrodynamics, aerostatics or aerodynamics. However, some meteorology may be taught in World Geography in Class 7/8.

Acoustics, thermodynamics and the processes and laws of electricity are all covered in Class 7/8.

Endorsement:

Name: Linda Parker

Position: Chair of ECTE

Date: 28/11/18