

Ethos

MWS seeks to provide an excellent education to help children realise their full potential as inwardly-free, creative, secure, warm-hearted and capable adults who show initiative and responsibility in life. It seeks to do so without any discrimination based on social characteristics.

Along with approximately one thousand other schools worldwide, the school is founded upon the educational ideals of Rudolf Steiner, who established the first Steiner Waldorf school in Stuttgart in 1919 as part of an attempt to renew culture and society after the First World War. Although teachers continue to gain insights into human development and spiritual values from Steiner's philosophy, Anthroposophy, the schools do not teach this or any other particular philosophy or religion to children. The schools celebrate seasonal festivals with a broadly Christian character but children of all religious and cultural backgrounds are welcomed and different faiths and traditions are respected.

A broad curriculum aims to meet the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs of children at each stage of their development, and curriculum development and methodology are determined by the teachers themselves. Through human dialogue and using an artistic approach, the hands and the heart are engaged, as well as the head. Children are encouraged to find goodness, beauty and truth in themselves and in the surrounding world. The formal learning of writing, reading and numeracy begins at age six after children have first had the opportunity to become ready by developing speech, co-ordination and relationships in the kindergarten. A class teacher stays with a group of children for up to four years, and this, together with an emphasis on formative and on-going assessment and on the involvement of parents, avoids the over-dependence on testing so often found elsewhere.

A familiarity with all the technologies that influence our lives is an essential part of a complete education but a certain amount of evidence indicates that too much exposure to television, video games and computers can be detrimental to child development, especially for younger children. At MWS, as at many other Steiner schools, we ask parents to discuss these issues with teachers and to limit media exposure in order to foster the development of imagination, personal relationships and skills based on the richness of direct experience. Television screens, computers and recorded music are not used in school below the age of fourteen, except occasionally and sparingly by the oldest children.

Founded in 2017, MWS has a small, rural, village-school character, with four year groups usually being combined in each class. In keeping with its setting within the Esk Valley Camphill Community, which provides accommodation and work in a community setting for adults with special needs, the school strives to be genuinely inclusive. Although a financial contribution is required from parents of children over the age of five, this takes the form of a means related contribution in support of the whole school rather than a fee per child. The school also seeks to allow children to derive maximum benefit from the Village farms, workshops, festivals and cultural events and from the beautiful natural setting. At present the school does not cater for young people beyond the age of eleven and aims to continue to achieve a successful transition to secondary schools for leavers.