



York Steiner School Curriculum policy

1. Aims

Our curriculum aims to:

- Allow children's potential to unfold as they grow towards becoming self-motivated adults, in a rigorous yet unpressurised and joyous way. The Steiner-Waldorf curriculum seeks to provide a warm and encouraging school environment in which children can grow and learn.
- Offer a broad and balanced curriculum enabling children to develop a love of learning and commitment to life-long learning. Rooted in experience, the curriculum develops from the play-based learning in kindergarten, through the classes 1 – 8, towards the formal learning that they need as they transfer into the maintained sector in key stage 3, for GCSEs and beyond. This prepares them to choose an academic, technical or vocational route, or any blend of these. They will then have the adaptability, knowledge and life skills for future education, training and employment.
- Enable all children to develop resilience and the ability to greet new situations with confidence and enthusiasm, to become increasingly capable of independent thought, have a willingness to question, and show a sense of joy and wonder when confronted with something new. They have the deep and rich cultural capital to succeed in life.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of the [Independent School Standards](#), which all independent schools in England must meet.

It also reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014](#) and [Equality Act 2010](#), and refers to curriculum-related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's [Governance Handbook](#).

It complies with our funding agreement and articles of association

In addition, this policy acknowledges the requirements for promoting the learning and development of children set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#).

The school is exempt from statutory assessments such as the Reception Baseline Assessment, the EYFSP, Phonics Screening and KS 1 and 2 SATS.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Trustees of the school

The Trustees will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the Education Manager to account for its implementation.

The Trustees will also ensure that:

- A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets
- The school teaches a 'broad and balanced curriculum' which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education; and also includes personal, social, health and economic education
- Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEN) and English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- The school is exempt from statutory assessments such as the Reception Baseline Assessment, the EYFSP, Phonics Screening and KS 1 and 2 SATS.
- The Board of Trustees participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- Pupils from Class 7/year 8 onwards are provided with independent, impartial careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced

3.2 Education Manager

The Education Manager is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

- All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met
- The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the governing board/trustees
- They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate
- The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements
- The governing board/trustees is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- The governing board/trustees is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions

- Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEN

3.3 Other staff

Other staff will ensure that the school curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy.

- The Education Manager will oversee that curriculum matches policy.
- Subject Leaders will take responsibility for consistency in their subject areas.
- All Class and subject teachers will ensure planning, teaching and learning is matched to policy.

4. Organisation and planning

Kindergarten Early Years from age 3-6 years

The Early Years curriculum is holistic, and as such, subjects are not considered separately but are woven into the daily rhythm, thus reinforcing the inter-connection of artistic, scientific, mathematical, creative and aesthetic impulses. In this way, the activities and environment meet the cognitive, emotional, social and spiritual needs of the children in a variety of different ways. Pupils experience all subjects within the wider context of their daily life and environment. Experiential learning, discovery through creative play and social interaction with peers and teachers constitute the main education themes. They have the opportunity to embed basic skills (physical, emotional, social and cognitive) and develop lifelong learning habits that enable them to become enthusiastic, imaginative, resilient, creative and eager to learn students.

Activities are carefully planned to ensure that the needs of the individual children and the group are met. Such activities include: baking bread, painting, seasonal crafts, modelling, food preparation, Ringtime and Story time. The children's interests and stage of development are regularly assessed using a 'Kindergarten Progress Tracking Grid' and this information is used for planning. This enables staff to ensure that provision is carefully differentiated depending on the age and needs of the children thus ensuring challenge for all children.

Children stay in the same Kindergarten with the same teacher for three years.

We follow the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (with some exemptions granted by the DfE along with all Steiner Waldorf settings) for children up to the age of five. The older children in kindergarten (age 5-6) follow a different curriculum in line with the rest of the school. This includes greater differentiation and challenge for this age group and

includes special projects, increased responsibility to meet the children's growing independence and developing skills and building the children's readiness for Class 1. Please see curriculum framework for more details. The formal schooling process begins in Class 1 when the formal teaching of reading and writing are introduced.

Classes 1 - 8

The key aim of a Steiner School is to enable pupils to become adults with a healthy balance between their thinking, their well-being and their activity, with a keen social sense. From Class 1 the emphasis is on developing the pupils' social and emotional confidence by channeling their academic learning through artistic expression; in this way, by Class 8 their understanding becomes both analytical and creative, and they are well on the way towards this key aim.

The core subjects of the curriculum are delivered in double length lessons (or 'Main Lessons') at the beginning of each day. These focus on a single core topic for a 3 or 4 week 'block', allowing a deep, experiential exploration of the subject, that can include other disciplines as pathways towards a more rounded appreciation of the topic. This is then allowed to 'sleep' until that subject returns in a new block and the pupils gain confidence from 'recognising' content that they have already made a meaningful relationship with.

Each individual Main Lesson will consciously use activities that engage 'head, heart and hands'. Material is taught with movement, rhythm, imaginative story telling or retelling, careful use of images and metaphors to engage the pupils in lively connection with the material, as well as clear and rigorous instruction and practice of skills, with plenty of pupil focused activity as well as teacher-led input. The lesson is taught to the whole class, with variety and differentiation designed to meet the learning styles and needs within the group and provide appropriate challenge for all children.

Following Main Lesson, the remaining four periods of the school day cover subject lessons such as languages or gym delivered by specialist teachers, often supported by the Class Teacher. A particular feature of a Steiner Waldorf school is the consistency of the Class Teacher across the 8 years of the main school. Ideally the class teacher will meet the children in Class 1 and remain with them as their key facilitator for the next 8 years, working with long term challenges and thresholds for each child. Working with families on this timeframe builds support networks based in developing trust, knowledge and appreciation of the child in their own unique context.

This also develops a consistent knowledge of the educational progress of each child; regular screening of pupils enables appropriate support and intervention across a wide range of needs. The school works and liaises with external agencies where appropriate.

Literacy

- Class 1 – The alphabet and sounds, copy writing, early reading and spelling, blends and diagraphs.
- Class 2 – Recognize, write and read printed and cursive script, using 3 letter blends, spelling common words, writing simple sentences from themselves.
- Class 3 – Reading simple books. Developing independence in composing and writing. Work on verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Reciting poetry. Using compound words and recognizing common homophones.
- Class 4 – Using a dictionary. Punctuation. Writing formally with an ink pen. Reading confidently and independently. Writing known stories increasingly independently.
- Class 5 – Use of suffixes, prefixes, direct speech and more complex tenses. Reading fluently. Writing independent accounts of lesson content.
- Class 6 – Modal verbs, ability to recite and give talks. Formal letter writing. Writing up experiments. Writing accurate accounts of observations.
- Class 7 – Independent study using books, use of a Thesaurus, essay and report writing Creative writing.
- Class 8 – Figures of speech, use of subordinate and relative clauses. Different poetic styles. Writing an argument; debate style. Recognizing, evaluating and using persuasive language.

Speaking and Listening:

All pupils are expected to learn poetry and speeches by heart and recite in chorus or individually, from Class 1 onwards. From Class 4 pupils are able to give short presentations with minimal notes, culminating in the presentation of a year long personal project to a mixed audience at the end of Class 8. All classes enjoy working on drama presentations, gradually bringing these to larger audiences, often producing a pantomime in Class 7, and again culminating in 'the Class 8 play', a full length production of a Shakespeare play or another text of equivalent complexity, involving every pupil in a number of disciplines, including performing.

Numeracy

- Class 1 – Introduction to addition, subtraction, multiplication and division; number bonds up to 10, introduction to shape
- Class 2 – Mental practice and longer exercises, moving on to larger numbers, place value, number bonds up to 20, odd and even numbers, columns and carrying over and simple geometry
- Class 3 – Practice of all 12 tables continues; long multiplication and long division is introduced, together with money handling and change, and various forms of measurement involving linear dimensions, liquids, solids and temporal intervals

- Class 4– Introduction of fractions; measurements and area work continue
- Class 5 – Freehand geometry is introduced, as is the decimal system
- Class 6 – Percentages, profit and loss, simple interest and proportion and ratio are covered; geometry lessons introduce the use of the compass and protractor
- Class 7 – Graphs and algebra, further aspects of geometry
- Class 8 – Fractions, squares and roots, equations and practical problems

Humanities

A rich immersion in the humanities begins in Class 1, with folk tales and nature stories drawn from the wisdom of traditions around the world. Progressing through the classes, the children absorb the legends of saints, multicultural folklore, Native American tales, Norse mythology and sagas; stories of Ancient India, Persia, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece; the history of Western civilization from Rome through the Middle Ages, the rise of Islam, the Age of Exploration, the Renaissance and Reformation and on to an understanding of the Modern World. In the early years, by “living into” these cultures through legends and literature, children gain flexibility and an appreciation for the diversity of mankind.

Geography as a distinct discipline develops out of earlier experience of the children’s direct surroundings with a more focused study of the local area in Class 4, broadening out in the following years to regional, national and global studies. Environmental issues are integrated into the life of the school and the local area.

- Class 4 – Project work based on the study of the geography of the local area.
- Class 5 – Geography of the British Isles.
- Class 6 – European physical and human geography.
- Class 7 & 8 – World physical and human geography, exploring the cultural, material and economic conditions of specific societies. Climate, weather systems, trade and wealth are included. There is a developing emphasis on environmental issues at this point.

History mirrors the broadening of the Geography curriculum, the Middle Ages and the transition from feudalism to the Renaissance, and the Age of Discovery with the great voyages of the 15th to the 17th centuries

- Class 4 – The Norse sagas and Viking society, especially as it impacts on local history in York.
- Class 5 - The culture and religion of early civilisations of India, Persia, Babylonia and Egypt, moving on to classical ancient Greek history.

- Class 6 – History of the Roman Empire; Roman Britain; field trip to Roman site; the rise of Christianity; Saxon and Danish invasions of Britain; the formation of England; events of 1066 including local battles; feudal society, power; East meets West; Islamic society, the Church and the Crusades
- Class 7 – Renaissance and Reformation, causes and consequences. Power, who has it and why? How does change happen? The Age of Exploration – new worlds; slavery and trade.
- Class 8 – The Modern World; revolutions in technology, politics and society; the previous century up to the present day, including the world wars and the Holocaust. Globalisation. Issues for the future of the world.

Modern Foreign Languages

From Class 1 onwards, children learn a wide range of German and French vocabulary and short phrases through songs, verses, poems, recitation, games and cultural activities. The written language is introduced towards the end of Class 3 or beginning of Class 4 where pupils also begin to gain an understanding of the grammar, spelling, phonics and structure of the language. Pupils continue to learn both languages until the end of Class 8.

Technology and ICT

Pupils are introduced to a wide range of simple technologies through their practical creative work starting with cooking and sewing. Traditional crafts such as farming, building and weaving are studied and, where possible, practised in Class 3. This later develops to include gardening, woodwork, pottery and metalwork. In these activities they use an increasing range of hand tools and learn how mechanical tools function

Computer technology is introduced towards the end of the Lower School when the pupils have developed an understanding of a range of mechanical technologies in the broad context of other disciplines. E-safety is introduced from Kindergarten onwards, in age-appropriate ways.

Religious Education

The moral and spiritual well-being of the children is nurtured by developing a strong sense of belonging for all children whatever their faith background. This is achieved through a calendar of seasonal festivals that the school celebrates together. A sense of reverence and an attitude of tolerance and respect towards each other is encouraged and modelled by the teachers and reinforced by verses said at the beginning and end of the day. Each class has a Religion lesson each week where they learn about historic and contemporary religious beliefs from all the main religious traditions. These lessons develop from traditional stories with a strong moral sense in

Class 1 to pupil presentations on world religions in Class 7 and biographies of figures who have made social contributions in Class 8.

Pupils develop a well-informed understanding of world religions, and a strong sense of the value of community and of the wonder of the natural world.

Eurythmy

Eurythmy is an art of movement that engages the whole human being. It aims to harmonise the children's physical well-being with their feelings or emotions. Regular eurythmy practice lessons help children to become more coordinated, graceful and alert and to be more at ease with themselves. In the eurythmy lesson the children move to poetry, prose text and live instrumental music and this experience deepens their aesthetic appreciation of literature and music and complements other aspects of the curriculum such as geometry and form. Eurythmy also requires the children to work in groups which develops spatial awareness and a capacity to sense the movements of the group as a whole, while also concentrating on their own movement.

Physical Education/ Games and Gym

The use of rhythm and movement is an integral part of many lessons, such as maths where pupils, for example, may throw and catch beanbags as they recite times tables, or a foreign language, where pupils might follow a sequence of movements when learning parts of the body, in addition to its inclusion at the beginning of each day in the rhythmic part of the Main Lesson.

Weekly games lessons include a wide range of social games, which develop over the years into team games. In the younger classes games are always introduced with a story so that the physical activity has an imaginative focus, and the games are designed to be inclusive and to help children overcome any apprehensiveness they might feel about joining in.

From Class 2 children carry out simple gymnastic skills in the 'jungle gym' - using gym equipment in an imaginative way to build their gross motor and balancing skills. In the older classes the gym equipment is used in a more formal way to strengthen and develop agility, flexibility, fitness and strength.

In Class 5 the ancient archetypal Greek Olympic events are introduced: running, jumping, (Greek palm to palm) wrestling, discus and javelin. These athletic skills continue to be built upon in the older classes.

Ball games, spaceball, territorial and invasion games are introduced with rules tailored to each age group/developmental stage to help develop spatial and social awareness.

In the later classes, there is more emphasis on skills and teamwork, across a broad range of activities, games and sports such as basketball, hockey, volleyball, handball, softball and badminton.

From class 6 circus skills are developed to improve coordination, concentration and rhythm including juggling, poi and unicycling.

The Natural Environment/Science

- The Class 1 child has already been immersed in reverence for the earth and the natural cycle of the seasons in their Kindergarten years, as well having a robust experience of outdoor play with natural materials. This continues in Class 1 and 2 with scheduled 'Outdoor Lessons' that bring an increasing focus on seasonal changes and signs, observation and recall, as well as introducing basic gardening skills. The Class 3 Farming thread studies traditional agricultural practices, with an emphasis on the health of the land.
- In Class 4 the first specific 'science' topic, The Human Being and the Animal Kingdom, observes the differences and similarities across the wide range of the animal world, with an emphasis on specialisation. This gives a first opportunity to follow an individual project to be presented to peers.
- Class 5 moves on to the plant kingdom, examining a wide range of botanical examples from fungus to pine trees, introducing the basic life processes of plants, with an increased emphasis on clear and detailed observation and record keeping.
- The next step, in Class 6 is to look at the earth itself in a Geology Main Lesson, exploring the processes through time and physical forces that have shaped the world. Fundamental physical phenomena (heat, light, sound and magnetism) are studied in the first Physics block with a series of experiences and experiments that are observed with the senses and recorded objectively and without judgement.
- This careful scientific training is continued in Class 7 with a continuation of Physics and the introduction of Chemistry (combustion, acids and bases, the lime cycle) and Biology (human life processes and well-being), as always taught as far as possible through experience, experiment and the clear observation of phenomena, consciously avoiding judgement before all data is collected
- Class 8 science lessons extend the work of Class 7 into mechanics, skeletal anatomy, metals and the periodic table, with the emphasis on questions we can still ask after all

senses have been deployed and all available data considered. Confidence in knowing questions can be asked is balanced with an awareness of the limitations of our answers.

Music

Music is integrated into the daily life of the class and taught as a separate subject. Singing and recorder playing is used in Main Lesson in a wide variety of contexts and all children sing daily. In the weekly music lesson all pupils have the opportunity to play a variety of percussion instruments and learn musical notation. They sing in chorus before learning to sing rounds and eventually in three or four part harmony.

Art

Artistic work is an integral part of the Main Lesson and is introduced in a wide variety of contexts as part of the recall and recording of the children's work. Pupils also have opportunities to learn a wide range of painting and drawing techniques as well as the use of other media in their weekly art lessons throughout the school years.

Handwork, Woodwork and Crafts

Handwork is an integral part of the curriculum for all children from Class 1 to Class 8. It provides a balancing element to the intellectual activities experienced elsewhere in the curriculum and is designed to aid the harmonious development of the child.

Handwork skills taught in the weekly lesson include sewing, knitting, crochet, weaving, tailoring, dyeing and felting, with importance placed on the use of high quality, beautiful and natural materials in order to enhance the artistic and creative development of the child.

All Class 8 pupils design and sew their costume for the end of year play.

Various crafts may also be included in subject based lessons or by the Class Teacher, such as modelling, work with paper and card and painting.

From Class 6 woodwork is introduced, along with green-woodworking skills and a variety of other crafts such as lino printing and modelling with clay.

5. Inclusion

Teachers set high expectations for all pupils. They will use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- More able pupils

- Pupils with low prior attainment
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Pupils with SEN
- Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

Teachers will plan lessons so that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities can study every subject, wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving.

Teachers will also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part in all subjects.

Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEN policy and information report.

6. Monitoring arrangements

Trustees monitor compliance with the Independent School Standards 1, 2 and 5, and compliance with other statutory requirements through: *Trustee meetings and standing items, reports, school visits, meetings with teachers and the school council.*

Subject leaders monitor the way their subject is taught throughout the school by: *Planning scrutiny, learning walks, book monitoring etc.*

Subject leaders also have responsibility for monitoring the way in which resources are stored and managed.

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Education Manager. At every review, the policy will be shared with the full governing board.

7. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- EYFS policy
- Assessment policy
- SEN policy
- Equality information and objectives