

Kildare Steiner School

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Mission Statement

We aim to awaken a love for learning by planting the seeds for free thinking, to nurture a sense for beauty through healthy emotional development, and to nourish a reverence for life with compassion and imagination.



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Waldorf Education at the Kildare Steiner School

The Kildare Steiner Waldorf School is an independent, non-denominational and coeducational school, offering a comprehensive Steiner Waldorf education for children aged 3 to 15 years. For younger children, we also offer a Parent & Child group. The school was opened in 1987 in Dublin and relocated to the current four

acre site in Co. Kildare in 1999

We are members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (www.steinerwaldorf.org) and the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (www.ecswe.net) which represents 712 schools and over 150,000 pupils in 28 European countries. We are also a member of the Irish Steiner Kindergarten Association (www.iskaireland.org).

Steiner / Waldorf education is a global movement which aims to support young people to grow to be confident, free thinking individuals who have a sense of purpose in their lives. This is achieved through deepening holistic perceptions of the human condition, bringing these insights and knowledge of childhood and evolutionary development to bear in the teaching methodology. We offer our pupils the tools they will need in order to flourish as resourceful, considerate, honest, successful and socially responsible adults. Children's physical health, relationships, spiritual development, expression, and imagination are given as much attention as their intellect. We seek to foster values of wellbeing, self-discipline and selfdetermination



Our core subjects are taught by experienced and highly qualified Waldorf Curriculum Practitioners. These Class Teachers work with their holistic knowledge of child developmental to provide rich and interesting experiential learning which speaks directly to the children through their head, heart and hands.

The deeper value of play is now widely recognised in mainstream schools. We learn to play well in our early years classes. Imagination becomes an increasingly conscious focus through the primary school years leading on to capacities in creative thinking at our secondary level.

The use of crafts, drawing, painting, music, movement, poetry, modelling and drama all enhance the learning experience across the curriculum. We encourage a sense of value in artistic and cultural endeavours and promote the integration of this into learning and into life.

We have no formal exams; instead, our children receive continuous qualitative assessment as active, engaged learners who develop a natural love of learning. In the secondary school analysis and evaluation is again, ongoing and consistent in its academic rigour.

Our pupils experience school as a personal journey and the older they get the more independently they will learn to work. We encourage empathy as opposed to competition and we teach our pupils to respect and to support themselves and each other with deep integrity.

We respect the diversity of spiritual beliefs. Our pupils gain perspective and understanding of the various cultures of the world through study and the celebration of festivals throughout the year. As a framework for our seasonal calendar of events, we broadly follow some of the key Christian festivals. However, we fully embrace other beliefs and traditions and delight in the opportunity to learn more and share together. Equally, we welcome students, families and staff, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation, who are willing to support the ethos of the Steiner approach.



"Both our daughters have attended this school and we are profoundly grateful for the exceptional education they have received. We have seen them grow and thrive, not only academically but also emotionally and spiritually" 2020 Primary School parent

Our Three Levels of Education Provision

Pre-School: Parent & Child Group to Kindergarten

For pre-kindergarten aged children and their parents, there is the opportunity to attend our "Little Gnomes" Parent and Child group, based on Steiner principles. The group runs each Wednesday and Thursday during term-time from 10am to 12.30 pm and sessions are led by trained Steiner Kindergarten teachers.

Sessions are held in our designated room and gardens on the school grounds where small children and their parents can safely play and enjoy a range of activities. Beautiful, natural materials provide the sensory mood and session follows a gentle rhythm and pace giving younger children a sense of security and belonging. Parents also find the experience relaxing and inspiring with seasonal festivals being celebrated, simple crafts, baking, gentle puppet plays, stories and songs.

Children attending the Parent and Child group are prioritised for places in our Kindergarten and further information on enrolling in the group, including fees, is available by contacting the school office or

parentchildgroup@kildaresteinerschool.ie

During the first six years, children learn a great deal through imitation. In the home-like environment of the Kindergarten, simple domestic activities such as baking, cooking, cleaning, gardening and sewing encourage free imitation and develop a wide range of skills and capacities. There is a strong emphasis on play, especially self-initiated free play outdoors so that children can develop social skills like cooperation and empathy. The changing rhythms of the year are marked through stories, crafts and the celebration of seasonal festivals.



Our Kindergarten is broadly equivalent to a combined preschool, Junior Infants and Senior Infants class, with a mix of ages. Our junior Kindergarten is for ages 3-4 and our senior Kindergarten for ages 5-6. Kindergarten hours are 9.15am to 12.45pm, Monday to Friday. Younger children must be fully toilet-trained before enrolling. Children enrolled in Kindergarten are prioritised for places in our primary school.

Funding for kindergarten fees is available under the Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) scheme as we are an approved provider for this scheme. This funding covers three hours of preschool per day (15 hours per week). However, as our Kindergarten runs for 3.5 hours each day (9.15am to 12.45pm), there is an additional fee payable for enrolling in the full daily session.

"There is no other place I'd rather my son be at school than in the Kildare Steiner School kindergarten. The children are treated with the greatest kindness, respect and care."

2020 Kindergarten parent





Our Three Levels of Education Provision

Primary School: Class 1 to Class 6

Formal learning starts in Class 1 for children aged 6. Literacy and numeracy are introduced through creativity and imagination, including stories, painting, drama and music to embed the learning process. We educate the whole child, not just the intellect, so our teachers are dedicated to fostering a genuine enthusiasm for learning through different creative means.

Core subjects taught include: English, mathematics, history, geography, science. These are taught in 2, 3 or 4 week, topic based, main

lesson blocks which are revisited and built upon in each successive year. Literacy and communication skills are embedded into these topics and assessed throughout via the evaluation of main lesson bookwork. Manual dexterity is encouraged and developed through work with textiles, wood, clay and other materials, and the children participate in drama and movement classes; creating a balance between academic, artistic and practical activities. An emphasis on outdoor activities is maintained and children play traditional and cooperative games, grow produce



in the school polytunnel and learn bush craft, green woodwork and land skills. Subject lessons include Mathematics, Irish, German, Handwork, and Bush craft, Music, Art, Craft and Sports.

As is traditional in Steiner Schools, the upper classes join Steiner Waldorf schools from across Ireland for a large, annual sporting event based on the Olympic Games. This follows a main lesson on Ancient Greece, and includes the traditional Greek sports. It is a fun time of camping out and imbibing the feeling of the ancient Greek Olympians as they prepared for their sport.

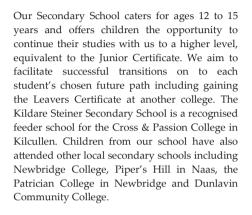
Primary school hours increase incrementally over the duration from classes 1 to 6. Classes 1 & 2 run from 9am to 1pm, Monday to Friday. Classes 3 & 4 run from 9am to 3pm, Monday to Wednesday and 9am to 1pm on Thursday and Friday. Classes 4, 5 & 6 run from 9am to 3pm, Monday to Thursday and 9am to 1pm Friday. There is an afterschool care service available for Kindergarten, Class 1 and Class 2 children from 1-3pm each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. As we are a small independent school, we do not yet have the resources to support children with learning difficulties or special needs.



"Our son is nurtured, protected and is free to develop" 2020 Primary School parent

Our Three Levels of Education Provision

Secondary School: Class 7 to Class 9



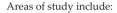
Kildare Steiner Secondary School provides a rich and challenging curriculum designed to consolidate learning and to inspire and equip students with the capacities to reach for their highest potential. The curriculum is defined by strong academic principles grounded in critical thinking, balanced with imagination and creativity. Experiential learning is at the heart of the curriculum, enabling students to synthesise abstract concepts and practical processes, which will allow topics to come alive.

By engaging the will directly, in order to build an understanding of themselves and their own



paths, our young people will naturally seek out and strive to find their true place in the world.

Independence and clarity of thought, self-reliance / confidence and moral acuity are all highly valued among teachers of the Secondary School years. We encourage our students to engage with the world in all its complexity and to bring focus to it through the lens of personal endeavour. We are acutely aware of the challenges facing adolescents in the 21st Century and have established clear and proven strategies to develop inner strength, resilience, empathy, compassion and community-building to support them towards their rightful place as responsible, productive and well adjusted adults.



- Mathematics (inc. Trigonometry),
- English Literacy,
- Poetry,
- · Languages,
- Art History,
- Astronomy,
- Biographies,
- Physiology & Anatomy,
- Mechanics,
- Geology,
- Biology,

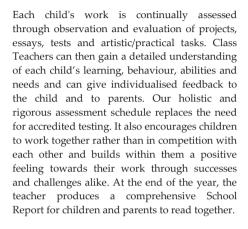


- Chemistry,
- Physics,
- Geography,
- Economics,
- Nutrition,
- Gym,
- Drama,
- Art,
- Woodwork,
- Crafts and more.

"I am so grateful that my son is part of this new Steiner secondary school"

2020 Secondary School parent

Our Assessment Framework



Regular parent-teacher evenings are also held throughout the school year fostering a holistic approach and facilitating parental engagement with their child's educational experiences and progress.

In the Secondary School, assessment becomes more rigorous still and includes self assessment and more frequent testing based on recently covered topics. Secondary School reports include a detailed Annual Grades Record which will comprise part of each student's application submission to their future college placements.



Our Creative Approach to Teaching and Learning

We pride ourselves on delivering academic excellence in core subjects and functional skills to support a rounded and fulfilling education capable of nurturing any career aspirations. A fundamental principle of our holistic approach sees learning and personal growth as part of the same picture, therefore the whole child, with all their dynamic capacities, is given deep consideration. The education of the body and the emotions support the cognitive faculties as contributing to a holistic picture of the whole human being. The development of practical skills plays a key part in this:

Art & Music

Painting, drawing, singing and playing instruments is fundamental to the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum. Children are supported to relax into and enjoy their artistic contributions as integral to their learning journey. At ease with their own creativity, children then become truly free to learn.

Handwork

Handwork skills are taught throughout the school. They serve to strengthen the child's will and develop fine motor skills and the related brain functions which are the foundation for thinking. Handwork skills include knitting, crocheting, spinning and simple weaving, crossstitch, four-needle knitting, doll-making and hand-sewing. Boys and girls do handwork together and learn all the skills equally.

Crafts

Crafts are an important aspect of the Steiner school curriculum as working with the hands develops a child's intelligence and ability to think logically and methodically. Crafts also create a balance with the academic subjects.



Having worked hard during the first part of the day, children are mentally tired and clearly enjoy something that challenges their physical skills in the afternoon. The traditional crafts such as weaving, baking, leatherwork, metalwork, woodwork and basketry are part of a cultural heritage that is fostered in our children, together with a respect and love for the world of work. Main lesson subjects often inspire a teacher to explore related crafts with the class.

Bush craft & Green Woodwork

Outdoor skills are taught in this subject, including constructing shelters, lighting fires, camp cooking, woodcraft and woodland management. These all help to build the children's confidence to positively productively engage with the outdoors and indeed the wider world and also to recognise our interconnectedness with and necessary respect for the natural environment. The freedom for children to work and play outdoors, climbing trees, improving their surroundings together regardless of the weather, exploring and learning as they go, also helps to create memories that last a lifetime.



Our campus, on 4.2 acres, has lots of open space for children to play a wide variety of field games. We have an outdoor basketball court and a well equipped adventure playground where children can test their endurance. Pupils are encouraged to join local sports clubs to have an experience of organised sport, whilst Secondary School students attend a weekly gym session under expert instruction.

"It has been a particular privilege to have [our children] taught by a team of deeply caring and insightful teachers who strive to understand the particular needs of every child" 2020 Secondary School parent





The Kildare Steiner School's policy on digital media

We limit the use of digital media yet, Steiner schools are not anti-technology, fully appreciating the need for our children to become able to successfully navigate a future that will be more technologically complex than we can imagine. The Steiner approach does recognise the critical delivering importance of an educational programme that integrates digital media and technology at developmentally appropriate ages, absolutely no earlier than age twelve and then incrementally. We believe, however, that if students first develop the capacity to engage in the world through real experiences, using their

imaginations, thoughts and deeds, they will then

be better placed to use electronic media as a valuable resource to supplement their will supported by their intellectual and emotional strengths.

Our approach to the use of screen-based technology and digital media has become reflected in the increasing weight of research about the impacts of such media on children. As well as parents' own concerns about both the quality and quantity of screen-based entertainment that children are being exposed to, academics now attest to a link between media addiction and poor socialisation in children.



Excessive exposure to TV, smart phones, computers and video games is deeply undermining to a child's living relationships to others and to the world around them. The chances of encountering inappropriate content are thus increased and this, of course, is even more damaging, separating the child from authentic life experience and embedding in them a distorted view of the world.

As Sue Palmer, author of Toxic Childhood, puts it, "Screen-based entertainment is as far removed from the 'real play' children need for healthy development as junk snacks are from real food."

The strong influence of these technologies and/ or the rise of social media in a child's life can be clearly identifiable in the classroom. Affecting physical demeanour. attention span, perseverance, interest in lessons, quality of work, peer relationships and many other aspects of a child's whole way of being, the Class Teacher has a great deal of additional work to do before progress can be made. Steiner education is not specifically a curative educational model and this extra work may take all the resources away from the class learning and, for that child, heavily detract from how the rich quality of the curriculum will be received.

Parents who consciously minimise their child's exposure to technology will need to know that they can count on all other parents to also uphold the policy. Thus, this is part of the parental agreement when enrolling your child with us. We will support you as much as we can so that when our children come to school, they will be safe from negative influences and not be excluded from conversations about digital media and its content

Parents have consistently found that reducing the influence of media on their family life has encouraged deeper interest in and respect for one another, enlivened their communication, and fostered a stronger and more positive connection to the world around them.

The misguided view that children will be left behind if not offered early exposure to technology is not supported by published



research. Paul Thomas, a former teacher and an associate professor of education at Furman University in the U.S. is of the view that "teaching is a human experience" and that "technology is a distraction when we need literacy, numeracy and critical thinking". This is a position supported by increasing numbers of parents who work in the ICT industry and Steiner Waldorf schools are flourishing in areas such as Silicon Valley.

Our school's policy on digital media aims to assist parents nurturing physically, emotionally and spiritually healthy children who are able to navigate the terrain of modern life.

Therefore, we ask that families limit to the greatest extent possible their children's exposure to smart phones, computer games, social media, television and other electronic media. Ideally, we would love to see all children at our school enjoy lives that are digital media-free. Children are not allowed to bring mobile phones to school.

Parents are asked to give active support to the quality of the education by helping children enjoy imaginative and creative activities at home rather than watching television, playing computer games or using social media.

If screen-time is permitted to older children, we particularly ask that this is not accessed during the week but limited to weekends. We are aware that it can be hard to change habits, and we will be happy to assist you with suggestions and moral support.

The heart of the matter is that we are not simply a school; we are a community. Parents in our community depend on the whole community to help them to create a home environment that supports and reinforces Steiner Waldorf education. The detrimental impact of media exposure can too easily be passed on to other children, reverberating through the community and showing up in other children's play, attitudes, language and inner life. It is therefore important for the health of the entire community for each family to understand and support the digital media policy wholeheartedly.

For further reading on this topic see below:

- American Academy of Paediatrics (2016)
 Children, Adolescents and Digital Media.
 Available at: http://
 pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/
 pediatrics/138/5/e20162593.full.pdf
- American Academy of Paediatrics (2011)
 "Media use by children younger than 2
 years" in Paediatrics, 128(5), pp. 1040-1045.
 Available at: http://
 pediatrics.aappublications.org/
 content/128/5/1040
- © Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, & Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (2012) Facing the Screen Dilemma: Young children, technology and early education. Available at: http:// www.commercialfreechildhood.org/sites/default/files/facingthescreendilemma.pdf
- Matt Richtel (2011) "A Silicon Valley School That Doesn't Compute", New York Times, 22 October 2011. Available at: http:// www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/technology/at-waldorf-school-in-silicon-valley-technology-can-wait.html?pagewanted=all& r=0



- Aric Sigman (2011) "Does Not Compute, Revisited: Screen Technology in Early Years' Education" in Richard House (ed.) Too Much, Too Soon: Early Learning and The Erosion of Childhood, Hawthorn Press, UK, pp.265 – 289. Available at: https:// www.hawthornpress.com/wp-content/ uploads/2016/04/Too-Much-Too-Soon-Aric-Sigman-Chapter.pdf
- Schmitt-Stegmann, Astrid (translation), (2019), 'Growing up healthy in a world of digital media'. Published by InterActions. Stroud, UK. interactionspublishing@outlook.com

Being members of the School Community

In Steiner schools throughout the world, the commitment and co-operation of parents in the life of the school is essential for both the wider school community and individual families to those who embrace flourish. For commitment to become involved in a Steiner school, the rewards are rich and satisfying. Close participation, not only with their child's holistic education and personal growth but also with the health and sustainability of a community striving to realise the profoundly hopeful values of Steiner Waldorf Educational principles for the benefit of all.

At the Kildare Steiner School, parents are involved in three main aspects of the school as follows:

Supporting the ethos of the Steiner educational approach

It is essential that families who join the school take the Steiner Waldorf approach seriously, particularly by supporting it in the home environment. Parents must be prepared to work in partnership with their child's teacher to ensure that there is common ground between the school and home environment so that each strengthens and supports the other. On a practical level, we ask that parents take the time to understand, to respect and to implement the school's ethos and values, as well as its policies: e.g. the clothing policy, digital media policy etc.



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Assisting in the running of the school

As explained, families should expect to be asked to contribute to the smooth running of the school. The school is managed by the College of Teachers and supported by the school Board for legal matters and administration, and also via the various Mandate groups. Mandated duties are undertaken on a voluntary and shared basis by parents and teachers alike as they are able, and include: Communications, Events & Festivals. Fundraising, Accounting. Major Buildings & Maintenance, Grounds Housekeeping. Other work done by parents



includes assisting in our kindergarten, specialist events and cleaning their child's classroom on a rota basis.

Financial commitment

As an independent school that receives no government funding, fees are essential to the continued financial viability of the school. Parents must ensure that they can pay the required fees in full and on time for the duration of their child's enrolment in the school. While limited temporary financial assistance may be available for families who have been enrolled in the school for at least one year, we depend on the majority of families being able to make the financial commitment required.

"We as parents love being part of this community" 2020 Kindergarten parents

Benefits of being an independent Steiner School The Kildare Steiner School is fully independent and so receives no government funding; thus, fees are our primary source of income for the running of the school. We have chosen to remain independent as this means that we are free to offer the full Steiner curriculum and ethos

Our Enrolment Procedure



Step 1: Visit the school

We recommend that families interested in enrolling come to visit the school before making an application, especially if they are not familiar with the Steiner system. In this regard, we run regular Open Days throughout the year where families can see our school, meet and chat with our teachers and gain an insight into the Steiner approach. Information on Open Day dates is available by contacting the school or visiting our website.

Step 2:

Complete an application form and pay the application fee

The enrolment process begins with your submission of our enrolment application form, available on request from the school office. This should be received by January prior to a September start. However, as demand is growing, we recommend that parents apply 12 months in advance, especially for Kindergarten places. Please note the priority listing below. For all children transferring from other schools, we require a report from their current teacher the included in application submission. Applications can only be accepted using our enrolment form and with the correct, nonrefundable application fee attached. (Please contact the school office for details on all current applicable school fees).

Step 3:

Attend a readiness interview

Following receipt of the application form, the respective Class Teacher will arrange for parents and child to attend readiness interview at the school. During the interview, the Class Teacher will speak with both parents and child and make an assessment of the child's readiness for the class in which they intend to enrol. The outcome of this interview is entirely at the Class Teacher's discretion and, drawing on anthroposophical insights, will be based on what is considered best for the child in question.

Step 4: Complete the enrolment process

After a successful interview and an initial 2 week classroom placement period*, families are invited to enrol and tuition fees are payable for 10 months of the year. (There is partial funding available for Kindergarten fees under the Government's Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) scheme). Details of current fees are available by contacting the school.

*Nominal fee payable. After 2 weeks (10 days) attendance of school by your child, the Class Teacher and yourselves will meet to discuss the experience and finalise the enrolment process. Kildare Steiner School Prospectus

The school does not have a geographic catchment area for accepting applications, therefore all applications are welcome. However, submissions are prioritised based on the date of receipt and by following the priorities list below:

- Siblings of children already enrolled in the school
- 2. Children of current school staff.
- Kindergarten children intending to stay for their full primary education (i.e. up to Class 6).
- Children from local Camphill house parents / co-workers (Camphill Communities are Steiner-based organisations working with adults with special needs - there are three in Co. Kildare)
- 5. Children transferring from other Steiner Waldorf schools/kindergartens.
- Children enrolling for the full daily Kindergarten session (i.e. 3.5 hours).
- 7. All other applicants.

The school reserves the right to prioritise applications on the basis of current the enrolment needs of the primary school. Places in our primary school are automatically reserved for children enrolled in our Kindergarten.

With no government funding, we are extremely limited in the numbers of pupils with any type of learning / behavioural /emotional issues or other special needs that we can accommodate in any one year. It is important for us to ensure that we would be able to meet the needs of both the individual child and the other pupils in the class.



Further Reading on Steiner Waldorf Education:

Websites

- Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship: https://www.steinerwaldorf.org/
- European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education: http://ecswe.net/about/characteristics-of-steiner-waldorf-education/
- Irish Steiner Kindergarten Association: www.iskaireland.org
- "Why Waldorf Works" a US-based comprehensive website about Steiner Waldorf education:

www.whywaldorfworks.org

 Waldorf Answers - a website on the philosophy and practice of Steiner Waldorf education with links to many schools worldwide: https://waldorfanswers.org/

Talks and videos

- Waldorf 100—The Film. (Parts 1 and 2).
 These two short films made for the
 Waldorf 100th anniversary and give a very
 good international overview of Steiner
 education https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfec6eF4I-4 https://
 www.youtube.com/watch?
 v=vDFmUwA3 jE
- What is a Steiner School? A short film about Steiner education in the UK: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kpel5f3-3PM
- Educating Children For The Journey A
 TED talk by Jack Petrash https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imaW-TabxOEb
- Why Waldorf? A short film from the Marin County Waldorf School in California: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZmAX5adCl0



Books

- Jack Petrash (2003) <u>Understanding Waldorf</u> <u>Education: Teaching from the Inside Out</u>, Floris Books, UK.
- Torin M. Finser (1994) <u>School As A Journey</u>, Steiner Books, Inc.
- Rahima Baldwin Dancy (2012) You Are Your Child's First Teacher: Encouraging your child's natural development from birth to age six, Ten Speed Press

How to Find Us



The Kildare Steiner School is located in a beautiful and peaceful rural location halfway between the towns of Kilcullen (County Kildare) and Dunlavin (County Wicklow).

It can be easily reached from surrounding towns of including Kildare, Naas, Newbridge, Baltinglass and Athy. kildaresteinerschool.ie 353 (0)45 401919



