



# SteinerAcademyExeter Newsletter

Issue No 87 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018

## Dates for your Diary

For meetings outside of school hours please use the West Garth Road pedestrian gate to access the site. All evening meetings start at 19.30 unless indicated

Thurs 19 <sup>th</sup> July	End of term, school finishes at 14.00. No afternoon care	Wed 5 <sup>th</sup> Spet	Class 1 - 10 return to school
Sat 1 <sup>st</sup> Sept	Community work day	Wed 5 <sup>th</sup> Sept 15.30	Kindergarten picnic
Tues 4 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Inset day	Thurs 6 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Kindergarten return to school
Tues 4 <sup>th</sup> Sept 10.30	Class 1 picnic	Sat 6 <sup>th</sup> Oct	PTFA welcome Ceilidh

## Thank you networks! We can't do it without you.

Here is wishing all parents, carers, children, families, grandparents, child minders, family pets etc. a great summer break - yes, it takes more than a *village* to educate a child these days. In a digital age it is more accurate to acknowledge the *networks* we build for ourselves and our children: hopefully real rather than virtual, but nevertheless complex, subtle and in need of constant care and maintenance.

I once told a parent that a school could never be more than the icing on the cake of family life. They responded by saying that their child didn't like icing, was going to be home-schooled and that they didn't eat cake anyway, which was fair enough, but I continued to believe in my image for a few years longer. I now accept that it really is not that simple. We are all in in together, as a former Prime Minister said. We build communities around ourselves and our children, however loosely they are held together, which is one reason why some children (and parents) are anxious about school holidays, aware that some basic certainties are going to disappear for a time. It is always important, right up to the final farewell assembly, to reassure children that school *will* return in September, yes with some new faces, but most importantly with plenty that are familiar.

By September both the World Cup and Wimbledon will be over, Brexit will continue to grumble on and we will either have a hose-pipe ban or regional flooding. Beyond that? Very few certainties, but here are my predictions: Schools will continue to feel the financial pressures, and more and more will make headlines about staff cleaning toilets and children bringing loo role from home. A direct follow-on will be news of cuts in music, games, the arts and all things creative. Hopefully exams, both SATs and GCSEs will be in the spotlight again, with growing public scepticism continuing to grow around the benefits of spot-check, high-stakes testing. Child and adolescent mental health will again be in the news, with responsibility being shifted from agency to agency but ending up, I don't doubt, with schools. And finally, teacher recruitment will again be a big issue for all of us, with more and more children being supported by fewer and fewer teachers.

On a hopeful note, wouldn't it be great if some highly placed policy maker joined the dots together: financial constraints lead to cuts in creative teaching, which added to exam pressure feeds growing mental health concerns and, guess what, people then choosing either to leave or simply not enter the teaching profession.

As an optimist I know that *networks* can and will bring us through the above, help us join the dots and get it right for our children. Rather than thank all the individuals who have contributed to our fifth school year (always at the risk of missing somebody out!), my thanks go to those who `network` on

behalf of the whole. Firstly the Board of Governors. Parents would (should) be amazed by the amount of work they do, all as volunteers, attending meetings, making monitoring visits, receiving bespoke and complex training, reviewing policies, challenging and supporting in equal measure. Secondly parents in their many combinations: around their child's class, as PTFA and fund-raising contributors, at work days, as ambassadors and recruiters, as neighbourhood parking diplomats and peace keepers(!) as choristers, critical friends and fellow pioneers. Thirdly all the staff - and not just the teachers - without whose resilience, flexibility and positivity none of this would be possible. Fourthly, and this may come as a surprise, all those outside agencies we call upon to support us in our work: Devon County Council, Babcocks, CAMHS, Balloons, Young Devon, the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, the other three Steiner academies, local head teachers, to name but a few.

And finally, thanks to the ultimate `network`, something invisible and intangible: the potential of each child's unique and slowly unfolding biography which hangs there, just out of reach, but motivates us all to make whatever contribution we can to their unknown futures. To all, a heartfelt thank you, enjoy a great break and let's network even harder in September! **Alan Swindell, Principal.**

## Parent and Child News

Like everywhere else in the school we have had a busy year, expanded the provision and grown in strength.

The four morning groups for 0-3 have enjoyed another year of weekly bread making, seasonal crafting and supportive parenting conversation.

The 3-4 year group is waving farewell to some of our friends as they move into kindergarten, we wish them a smooth transition.

The new group this year was for families with babies birth-walking. This gentle group supports the parent in the first year of parenting and has been a lovely peaceful beginning for all. We explore the Steiner and Pikler approaches to child development and spend time watching the babies, an element that is essential in our ever busier lifestyles. The first group of these babies will be "graduating" into the morning groups next term.

This year I trialed a parent education programme, a monthly opportunity to learn more about parenting in a Steiner school and the Steiner Early Years curriculum. I am hopeful that this will continue in the next academic year so keep an eye open for more information.

The morning groups do have a long waiting list, which is frustrating for all, but I do have vacancies in the afternoon birth-walking groups and the 3-4 year groups, so if you know of anyone with a new born baby or with a child who will be in reception year September 2019 send them my way. **Tara Milford,** [parentandchild@steineracademyexeter.org.uk](mailto:parentandchild@steineracademyexeter.org.uk)

## Farewell and thank you - Paul Lawton

It is time (once again) to say goodbye to Paul Lawton who has been so instrumental and 'core' (apologies for the maths pun) to the development and teaching of GCSE maths in our school.

After a particularly 'interesting' main lesson on compound interest Class 8 are delighted that they know how they can all become millionaires just by saving their pocket money each week!

Class 10 have already said their personal goodbyes to Paul which were heartfelt and full of gratitude after his unstinting support through their GCSEs which even went as far as making them morning toast on exam days.

I am sure that staff and students alike will have many more fond memories of Paul and we wish him well with his future endeavors.

Although all will agree that Paul's signature shirts, charisma and sarcastic wit are irreplaceable we are delighted to let you know that Lorraine James will be joining the team next term to teach Maths in the

Upper School. Lorraine has many years teaching experience and was very popular with students when she visited earlier this term. We look forward to welcoming her. **Upper School Team.**

## **Farewell and thank you Kate Berney and Ana Moreno**

It fills our hearts with great sorrow that we have to say *au revoir* and *merci beaucoup* to Kate and Ana, the glue that has held our class 1 family together. Kate and Ana will both be leaving our community, but will be held in our hearts forever. The impact that they have had on the children will resound throughout the years and we wish them all the best on their next adventures. **Mike Marks and Vicki Priddle, Class 1**

## **GCSE OFFER CHANGE**

Dear Parents. Over the course of the year the school has been reviewing its GCSE offer and based on feedback garnered from staff, students, parents and governors we are going to be making changes that we feel will positively impact the educational experience for our students. The consultation we undertook was threefold:

### *Student Voice*

Class 10 students were given a questionnaire asking them for their feedback. Overwhelmingly they responded negatively, expressing that they found the offer restrictive and that the 'one size fits all' approach of all students taking 8 GCSEs was of concern to them. The majority polled requested having an element of choice in their GCSEs so they could pursue their interests and talents in a more directed way. They recognised the need for the core subjects (Maths, Science, English) to be compulsory but that for other subjects there should be increased choice. Many questioned the amount of GCSEs saying that 8 was too many and having the option of taking less would be more in line with a Steiner approach and allow a broader curriculum to emerge.

### *Parent Voice*

All of the school's parents were sent a google poll. This showed us clearly that there was an appetite for greater flexibility in our offer. Around 61% would like to see 8 GCSEs offered, 71% would like 5 GCSEs if it led to us being able to offer a wider range of subjects. This clearly pointed us in the direction of looking at the possibilities of offering differing pathways for our students.

### *Teacher / Staff Voice*

Staff were also google polled and a similar picture emerged; a wish to add greater flexibility to our offer and to open up differing pathways to students to create increased flexibility and balance in our curriculum.

### *Next steps*

These insights and thoughts were then fed into the Upper School Steering group which holds the vision and development of the Upper School. We worked on a plan and timetable which would stay true to our mandate of offering a Steiner education and that would reflect the feedback received which was then submitted to the SLT and the Governors for approval. The plan is laid out below for your perusal. It gives our students the option of taking between 6 - 8 GCSEs. We are also currently looking at whether we can offer alternative qualifications for the non GCSE subjects if they are in line with a Steiner approach. As well as the subjects listed below our Upper School students will also have a carousel of 'enrichment' lessons taught in rotating blocks. These lessons will be driven by individual teachers' skills and interests and will offer a range of subjects from IT to campfire cooking.

This new offer will be made available to the current Class 8 and to subsequent classes following in their footsteps. In Class 8 students will be offered guidance in making choices that will serve them best.

## CORE SUBJECTS: All students will take the following:

English Language (GCSE)	Maths (GCSE)	Science - Synergy, Double Award (GCSE)
Art & Design (GCSE) or French (GCSE)		

## OPTIONS - Students can then choose one from each box below

Drama (GCSE) or History (GCSE)	Music (BTEC) or Geography (GCSE)	English Lit (GCSE) or Landcraft
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Aegir Morgan, Upper School Lead.

## Congratulations



To Ayla Virok who auditioned amongst 60 children for a part in the Exeter Northcott Christmas Pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk and was successful. She is over the moon as it was a very challenging audition amongst some very talented children. She will be doing 28 shows over Dec and Jan and we are very proud of her gusto and drive to take this on.

## Music lessons

It's that time of year again for you to sign up for musical instrument lessons if you so choose! If your child would like to start an instrument next year, please contact me and I will forward your email to the relevant tutor.

[fran.andre@steineracademyexeter.org.uk](mailto:fran.andre@steineracademyexeter.org.uk).

Instrumental lessons are £15 per half hour and lessons take place during school hours after main lesson (lower school). Lessons are missed on rotation so children don't miss the same lessons regularly. The instruments that are available are:

- Violin - Simon Baxter
- Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone - Steve Buckley
- Guitar - Rupert McDonald
- Piano - Fran Andre, James Knight, Lizzie Kirwan,
- Singing - Fran Andre, Lizzie Kirwan
- Drums - Allan Kerr
- Brass instruments - Andrew Stark

**Fran Andre, Music Lead Teacher**