

A brief history of Steiner Education

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) was an innovative academic born in Austria whose ideas founded the basis of Anthroposophy. He applied those ideas to education as well as agriculture, medicine, architecture, and social reform.

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship acknowledges Rudolf Steiner as the founding inspiration of modern day Steiner schools, but does not promote Anthroposophy or endorse every aspect of it.

The first Steiner school opened in Stuttgart in 1919 for children of workers at the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory. The school's benefactor was managing director Emil Molt, who asked Dr Rudolf Steiner to found and lead the school in its early stages.

This philosopher and scientist's insights inspired what has become a worldwide movement of schools that espouse and promote universal human values, educational pluralism and meaningful teaching and learning opportunities.

This progressive, international schools movement is noted by educationalists, doctors, policy-makers and parents for the effective education that it offers children. The ideas and principles which inform the education provide a credible and thoughtful perspective to the debate on education and human development.

Steiner schools are always co-educational, fully comprehensive and take pupils from three to ideally eighteen. They welcome children of all abilities from all faiths and backgrounds.

The priority of the Steiner ethos is to provide an unhurried and creative learning environment where children can find the joy in learning and experience the richness of childhood rather than early specialisation or academic hot-housing.

The curriculum itself is a flexible set of pedagogical guidelines, founded on Steiner's principles that take account of the whole child. It gives equal attention to the physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural and spiritual needs of each pupil and is designed to work in harmony with the different phases of the child's development.

The core subjects of the curriculum are taught in thematic blocks and all lessons include a balance of artistic, practical and intellectual content. Whole class, mixed ability teaching is the norm.

Steiner education has proved itself adaptable. More than 80 years after the first Steiner school was started in central Europe, this education continues to inspire people from all walks of life and in all parts of the world. Steiner schools have a reputation for producing well-rounded and balanced human beings who are able to cope with the demands of a fast-changing and uncertain world. Steiner graduates are highly sought-after in further education and workplace for their unfaded interest in the world and their resourcefulness.

Relevant links on Steiner Education

The Steiner Waldorf Fellowship

This body represents all Steiner schools in the UK and Ireland. It's aims are:

- to safeguard the ethos and identity of Steiner Waldorf education.
- to support our member schools in their efforts to provide a high quality and distinctive education.
- to represent the interests of Steiner education in the wider educational, academic, social and political context.

BLÁTHÚ Steiner Early Childhood Association

This organisation provides information on Steiner early years centres and kindergartens in Ireland.