



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Designing a New Avanti Curriculum

April 2020



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE
PRIMARY SCHOOL**



AVANTI SCHOOLS
TRUST

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Curriculum Review for Avanti Schools Trust

Designing a principled curriculum for the 21st century

Table 1: The Review Panel

Dr James Biddulph	Core Operational Team	Headteacher of the University of Cambridge Primary School; Lead on Review Team; Expertise in school improvement, curriculum and pedagogy, creativities and leadership
Ms Michelle Loughrey	Core Operational Team	Education Consultant; Expertise in school leadership, coaching, curriculum and creativity
Mrs Aimee Durning	Core Operational Team	Lead Teaching Assistant at the University of Cambridge Primary School; Special Needs expertise
Mr Luke Rolls	Core Operational Team	Assistant Headteacher of the University of Cambridge Primary School; Curriculum and pedagogy expertise
Dr Richard Pountney	Critical Friend	Academic advisor; giving advice to the team regarding methodology and analysis; critical friend; supporting the thinking of the review team
Mr Adrian Dow	Critical Friend	Headteacher of Greenwich Steiner School; expertise in leadership of Steiner school; providing the review team with Steiner curriculum implementation expertise
Dr Martyn Rawson	Critical Friend	Steiner Expert and Academic/Teacher Educator; provided the review team with Steiner expertise

Preamble

In Autumn 2019, Avanti Schools Trust welcomed three schools into its family of schools. These schools (formerly known as Steiner Academy Bristol, Steiner Academy Frome and Steiner Academy Exeter) had received *inadequate* judgements by Ofsted, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (Reports: [Bristol](#), [Frome](#), [Exeter](#)). Having brokered the responsibility for the schools, taking full account of the quality of education for the children attending, the Trust was energised to work with the school communities to explore and identify the key principles upon which a new non-faith curriculum could be designed. This also related to other work taking place within Avanti leadership teams to explore school structures, teaching and learning expectations and assessment.

In essence, and with no requirement to do so by the Department for Education, Avanti Schools Trust commissioned the University of Cambridge Primary School to bring together a team of educators to review what a new curriculum could be, building from the current positions within each school. The intentions were threefold: (1) to give children, parents (we use the term parents from now on to mean both) and educators the opportunity to inform the principles of the curriculum design (2) to create a new Avanti curriculum model that will attend to 'heart, mind and spiritual' education (or, in line with the Avanti vision statement, Character Formation, Educational Excellence and Spiritual Insight), and (3) to ensure an orderly transition from the original Steiner approach towards adopting a new approach as Avanti Schools.

From the outset, we understood that each school community would be dealing with a period of significant change and uncertainty. We understood that for many parents there was a desire for the curriculum review team to affirm the return of a Steiner Waldorf curriculum; for others, the desire for a holistic curriculum that attended to the whole person without specific request for a Steiner Waldorf model. We attempted to reassure children, parents, teachers, support staff and school leaders that we would listen attentively to their hopes and wishes and conduct our work in a sensitive and open-hearted way.

For clarity, we reiterated that we were neither reviewing nor critiquing Steiner Waldorf as an educational approach; we were also not deciding whether the schools should or should not continue with a Steiner Waldorf curriculum. This did create concern amongst some parents. It is important to acknowledge that there were dissenting voices about the whole process, the review terms of reference, and also the choice of the participants on the review team. Such positions are understandable given that many parents took major decisions (like moving home) and made significant efforts to send their children to a Steiner academy. Whilst we acknowledged the reasons for which the schools were originally founded, we wanted to emphasise the present situation, the need for change, for clarity and, in making recommendations, to suggest movement towards a new future. We saw the review process as an opportunity to define a new educational offer that would raise standards, provide a holistic experience and attend to the individuality and community spirit that is so evident in the Steiner Waldorf educational experience.

A curriculum is not a 'thing' but a living process. We accepted the [Cambridge Primary Review](#) (2010) recommendation that a curriculum should attend to national expectations as well as building from the expertise and specificity of the context and locality. We saw huge potential in each school community: the passion to develop a holistic education in the parent community, the wonderful buildings, many committed educators, resources and outdoor sites. We also recognised the enormous challenges ahead. Bold decisions will be needed to make the necessary changes to provide children with an excellent education that is also creative, arts-based, humane and sensitive to the values and needs of the diverse communities we met.

This report is written for the Avanti Schools Trust's Directors and Leadership team. Its intention is to provide an independent view on the principles upon which a new non-faith Avanti curriculum could be developed. It is purely advisory. How our recommendations are to be implemented, monitored and evaluated is a matter for the educational leaders within the Trust and at school level.

We would like to thank everyone who was involved in the review, particularly parents, children and educators. We present our recommendations to the Trust.

Dr James Biddulph FRSA FCCT

Terms of Reference

A new approach and curriculum is needed because the schools were not providing a high-quality education for all children. This review did not have the scope to analyse why the schools had failed, which was a question asked by a number of parents. Instead, the review was future-oriented, with a brief to:

- identify key principles upon which the new curriculum could be designed;
- identify possible principles which will inform implementation of the curriculum;
- identify forms of assessment that could support progress in learning and teaching;
- identify the hopes for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Essentially, we wanted to know what hopes each community had of its school: what type of human beings were schools trying to develop? What types of educational experiences were valued? Where were there tensions and where were there synergies? The focus was on identifying principles that could be applied to Early Years, Primary and Secondary school, but the detail for secondary school provision needs to align with Department for Education expectations and examined course structures. The review team accepted the Trustees' position that as state-funded schools, there is a balance that needs to be struck; a new curriculum needs to be ambitious and designed to give all learners the knowledge, skills and human qualities that will enable them to succeed in life, underpinned by a strong set of shared values.

Timeline of work

The full team met in November 2019, with subsequent planning meetings between the core operational team. In January 2020, members of the review team (James Biddulph, Michelle Loughrey, Aimee Durning and Luke Rolls) visited each school, charged with the task of meeting the school community to discuss hopes for the curriculum, explore the synergies between Steiner and Avanti philosophies of education and to consider the qualities and values of learners. This process involved workshops with children, parents and staff (see Appendix 1). Michelle Loughrey visited the schools for a second time, to provide another opportunity for parents and staff to share their views and ideas. She also spent time with children in class. This approach was designed to demonstrate a systematic and fair method of collecting data. We use these views, gained in good faith, to produce a curriculum model that acknowledges the hopes and attempts to alleviate the concerns in each community. James Biddulph, Richard Pountney and Adrian Dow then met to discuss the draft report and recommendations. Richard brought a valuable academic lens on the process and articulation of findings, and Adrian helped sharpen our focus on the use of language and concepts of Steiner education. Martyn Rawson then undertook a thorough review of the recommendations and draft report, giving valuable critical eye on the work conducted and indicating further opportunities in the future.

The Board of Trustees requested the review team to make clear recommendations by 20th April 2020 with the intention to implement the curriculum by 1st September 2020.

Principles underpinning the approach taken

The team was informed by approaches and notions about curricula that are established in the literature; for example, that designing a curriculum is a complex and ongoing intellectual pursuit. It is argued by Priestley and Xenofontos (2020) that effective curriculum making has to be underpinned by developed conceptual understanding by the curriculum makers. As such, the review panel engaged with many people through visits and various 'soundings', as well as discussing Avanti School and Steiner educational principles with serving Steiner school and Avanti academics and practitioners.

The word 'curriculum' is derived from the Latin word meaning racecourse or race, and has come to mean a general course, conveying the notion of going somewhere in a predefined direction. Our understanding of curriculum moves beyond its narrow definition as a 'course of study'. Instead, our conception is not to reduce the curriculum simply to content, and ignore practices such as assessment and pedagogy. A more

sophisticated definition is required. For example, *A Dictionary of Education* ([Rowntree, 1981](#)) offers the following definition:

[Curriculum] can refer to the total structure of ideas and activities developed by an educational institution to meet the learning needs of students, and to achieve desired educational aims. Some people use the term to refer simply to the content of what is being taught. Others include also the teaching and learning methods involved, how students' attainment is measured and the underlying philosophy of education. ([Rowntree, 1981](#))

And a member of the review panel described the notion of a coherent curriculum as one that:

... goes beyond the basic operations needed to select, sequence and pace content into schemes of work and lesson plans. It also exceeds the simplistic notion that a good curriculum is the vertical curriculum as well as a horizontal one. Conceptual coherence requires the propensity to deal with the curriculum as a complex idea, simply realised as a spiral in which learning is deepened as well as revisited. ([Pountney, 2019](#): p.13)

With this in mind, our review, by taking an open-ended methodology, started with understanding the hopes and aspirations of each school community. We collated data to consider themes, formulate a curriculum model, and give recommendations.

Methodology

The review team took a broadly social constructionist position, acknowledging the multiple ways in which reality is constructed; that there is no absolute truth to be 'found', only multiple expressions to explore and evaluate because people engage with human phenomena differently in their differing social worlds. This is the reason we went to speak with teachers, parents and children: because meanings are socially constructed. Through our review, our intention was to acknowledge and move beyond the recent challenges within each school community, to provide a space in which children, parents and staff could be heard and to vision what their new schools could become.

We adopted a qualitative methodology, knowing that in working within three different school communities we needed an approach that was 'less structured, with learning being reflective, cumulative and largely unpredictable' (Powell and Cremin, 2015: p.39). We understood each school to be a case within a larger case of the South West Avanti Schools – though the scope of our work could not be considered a detailed case study. Our intention was to look for the potential distinctiveness of each school and to consider the broad curriculum principles across all three schools.

Given that both qualitative methodology and case studies place emphasis on *multiple* methods, we used three main methods: semi-structured workshops using prompts (with adults) (Appendix 1) semi-structured arts-based elicitation tools (with children) (Appendix 2), and a co-constructed survey of ten questions that drew from the initial themes from the workshops (Appendix 3). We invited parents and staff to suggest possible questions for the survey. We also invited adults to explore different statements related to Avanti and Steiner education, to demonstrate the synergy between the two and to ascertain the differences (Appendix 4). The methods were chosen for their power of communication. We asked two main questions, consistent with the purpose of the review:

(1) What kind of humans do we want our learners to become?

(2) What are the principles of the experiences for the children?

The aim was to gather as many responses as possible in order to begin to see patterns.

Data gathering

During the course of their visits, the curriculum review team heard from pupils, parents, teachers, support staff, and senior and middle leaders. Views were gathered through organised workshops, and members of the review team were available to, and spoke with, all stakeholders informally.

Within the context of the planned workshops, the curriculum review team heard from around 300 people including parents, teachers and children. We also spoke with primary children and secondary students, from whom we received about 100 responses. All notes were collated and analysed.

We also received email requests from parents and teachers wanting to submit comments and ideas as late as 9th March 2020 (Appendix 5, 6, 7) and additional information provided by Martyn Rawson (Appendix 8).

Review Panel Visit 1

Four members of the review team visited each school for a day collecting data through workshops with parents and staff. Panel members met with children and used an arts-based methodology and discussion to gain pupil voice. As part of this visit, the team spoke with and gathered the views of 182 pupils, 88 members of staff and over 150 parents.

Parent Survey

A survey to gain views on what should be included in a school's curriculum was co-constructed with staff and parents, taking into account their views'. There were a very diverse set of opinions about the item design of the survey questions. The review team took a broad approach, providing scope for qualitative responses rather than a quantitative scale to determine views about each aspect of Steiner education, in consultation with the Avanti leadership and parent campaign group. The survey questions were reviewed and critiqued by critical friends on the review team.

Review Panel Visit 2

One member of the review panel visited each school a second time, each for a half day, to give parents and staff further opportunity to contribute to the review. The panel member was available for parents to come and speak to individually at the beginning and end of the day. Throughout the course of each visit, the panel member also had the opportunity to speak with children.

Survey Analysis

The review panel received 310 parent survey responses. These were analysed and summarised into themes and considered as part of the findings of the review.

Hearing voices: what we learnt from each school

The vignettes below attempt to capture the ‘mood’ and ‘hopes’ that arose in discussions through the various workshops, although we acknowledge that we cannot assume these to be agreed views of each school. We include them to demonstrate the importance we placed on hearing the voices in each community and to indicate the relationship between what people said and how we developed the curriculum. We include examples of the submissions we received via email to show the passion that parents have for their schools and the educational offer in each.

From Avanti Hall...

At Avanti Hall, parents hope for a curriculum that will nurture ‘a love of learning’ and ‘reverence’, and will ‘teach children how to contribute to life and to society’. Staff hope for a curriculum that ‘allows all students to thrive and succeed’. Parents and staff want the children to be ‘joyful’ in their learning; ‘the courage to be individual thinkers’; and to be ‘happy’ and ‘resilient’. Staff emphasised the importance of providing opportunities for children to ‘explore and discuss emotions’, while parents highlighted the importance of a well-resourced SEND and SEMH provision so that all children experience success.

Parents indicated their strong preference for ‘a delayed start to formal teaching’, citing this as a main priority for any curriculum discussion. Some staff echoed this view and referred to the importance of ‘age-appropriate’ learning with regular opportunities for deep learning of a subject; for example, in the style of the Main Lesson. Parents understood the need for teachers to assess children’s learning, but felt strongly that the school should be exempt from statutory testing, particularly in the Early Years. Parents wanted a curriculum that is ‘child-centred’, ‘varied’ and that had a ‘balance of creative subjects with academic’, with an ‘emphasis on rhythm and repetition’. They would like Kindergarten ‘to stay in its beautiful form’ and see it as ‘home away from home’, providing essential foundations for learning.

Parents wanted their children to experience a curriculum that enabled them to have opportunities for play-based learning and outdoor learning, in particular to be ‘immersed in nature in the seasons’. The children also indicated that they enjoy time with nature, in the woods and climbing trees. Parents and staff wanted the children to have opportunities for practical learning experiences such as ‘growing, harvesting and cooking’ and ‘farming and gardening’, as well as a curriculum rich with the creative arts and drama, crafts including handwork and woodwork, landcraft and ‘ambitious class trips’. Meditation and yoga were also suggested as possible curriculum components. Forest School activities are particularly valued by the community. In addition to these areas, staff highlighted the importance of PE and Movement, and opportunities for creativity and to be creative. The children shared that they too value these curriculum areas and especially enjoy the Steiner Olympics. The children indicated that they would like harder learning, more clubs and more trips.

Parents and staff spoke of the value they hold for seasonal festivals and the sense of community that this nurtures. They would like a calendar of festivals and celebrations to be a feature of the curriculum.

Parents’ hopes included for their children to be happy, and educated in a culture of kindness, trust and nurturing relationships, especially between the children and their teacher. They stressed the importance of teachers working in the school being Steiner-trained. Positive relationships and a sense of community were also important to the children. They talked about having the same teacher throughout the school, or a constant teacher, and calling teachers by their first names as important factors in building these relationships. Parents shared their vision of a behaviour policy which is therapeutic in its approach and without rewards, and where age-appropriate behaviours are understood.

Whilst children indicated that they would like more opportunities to learn about IT and to work on computers, parents indicated that they would prefer either no screens or the use of technology to be delayed and age appropriate.

We heard from a large number of parents and children that they did not want a school uniform to be introduced as 'it's more individual' without one. However, this was contradicted by some children who said they would like a uniform.

From Avanti Park...

At Avanti Park, parents hoped for a curriculum that would provide a 'supportive, encouraging, positive learning experience'; one that is inclusive because 'everybody's needs [are] met'. Parents said that the curriculum should 'continually foster a love of learning where children learn for themselves, rather than for their teachers or to pass tests'. The concepts of 'wonder, awe and reverence' were important to parents/carers. The need for the curriculum to be a 'balance between academic, creative and practical' and for it to foster 'resilience' was again a strong theme. Staff hoped for a curriculum that would result in 'intellectually, morally, spiritually nurtured children', and see 'enjoyment' as an important feature. They hoped for a curriculum that nurtured imagination and provided children with opportunities to learn 'how to be a global citizen'.

Parents shared a strong desire for a pure-Steiner curriculum to be reinstated, and identified the following areas as key in curriculum design:

- the opportunity for children to grow in their own time, fostering their own strengths and understanding their weaknesses;
- style of learning: Head, Heart, Hands;
- delayed formal learning;
- curriculum based on Steiner child development.

Parents understood the need for teachers to assess children's learning but felt strongly that the school should be exempt from statutory testing, particularly in the Early Years. Staff hope for a 'broad curriculum with value given to creative subjects at all ages', and 'opportunities for autonomous learning [that] encourages free thinking'.

Staff identified practical learning, outdoor learning and experiential learning as important for children. Parents shared this view. They also emphasised the importance of learning through play and the Main Lesson. Of particular importance, however, was creativity 'through all subjects' and 'learning through creativity across the curriculum'.

Parents and staff value a broad range of curriculum/learning opportunities and experiences, particularly movement and sport, crafts (handcraft, woodwork and metal work), Landcraft, story-telling, poetry, music and song, and 'rich oral learning'. 'Reverence, respect and joy in nature' are highly regarded in the community. Children too highlighted creativity, the Main Lesson, gardening and music as important to them. Parents referred to the Main Lesson as being 'rich, exciting and engaging'. Children suggested that they would like more opportunities for science, relationship and sex education, and more sport. Parents identified mindfulness and meditation as important features of a curriculum. Festivals and celebrations were again valued by the school community, and it was hoped that these be woven into the curriculum and celebrated throughout the year.

The community and relationships are important to the children. Parents wanted their children to learn in an ethos of 'kindness and love', while staff emphasised the importance of a 'nurturing', 'supportive' environment where children are 'unafraid to take risks' and where 'curiosity is encouraged'. Parents were keen that teachers working in the school should be Steiner-trained or sympathetic to Steiner pedagogy, and that children should be taught by the same, or a consistent, teacher as part of building relationships.

The children were keen for more ICT lessons and access to technology such as using laptops; however, parents stressed their desire for no screens in Kindergarten and the lower school, with little or no technology before the age of 11. Parents and a large number of children were both keen that school uniform should not be introduced. Parent shared that whilst they agreed with the Avanti Way ethos and principles, they had questions around what this would look like in day-to-day teaching and the learning environment.

From Avanti Gardens...

At Avanti Gardens, parents hoped for a curriculum where children would 'develop passions' and be 'inspired by experiences'. Staff wished for a curriculum to nurture 'social and literate' children. They saw that a curriculum should have 'clear objectives that link to the child's development and age' and that it should be 'artistically balanced'. Creative curricula, skills-based curricula or thematic curricula were suggested as possible structures. As in the previous settings, parents were keen that there should be a delay to formal learning and that the curriculum should be based on Steiner child development.

Outdoor learning, practical learning and learning through play were valued by parents as important approaches to learning. 'Experiential learning, e.g. gardening, growing things, woodwork, forging, knitting – which apply the head, heart, hands principles' was also considered important. Staff identified that the opportunity for children to 'go deep' into activities, for example during the Main Lesson, was something to preserve and develop. Yoga and mindfulness were also suggested by parents as possible curriculum components.

The creative arts, with an emphasis on music and singing, are highly valued in the community, with singing being cited as 'part of working daily'. Handcraft, woodwork, storytelling and languages are some of the broad range of curriculum areas that parents felt should be central to their curriculum. Staff suggested that outdoor activities, including Forest School, crafting and creativity were also important. They took pride in the high-quality final outcomes of arts and crafts projects. The children said that they enjoyed crafts, especially handwork, woodwork, pottery and weaving, and languages. Children's requests included more cooking lessons, more phonics and more sports. They reported valuing time spent in the garden, having picnics and playing in the trees.

Festivals and celebrations were again seen as an essential element of the curriculum by parents, providing an opportunity for the community to come together. Their power was envisaged as enabling children to be 'in tune with the seasons' and to develop 'reverence'.

Parents wanted their children to learn in 'a warm, welcoming community' with a focus on 'the individual child'. They felt it important to have Steiner-trained teachers working in the school, or teachers sympathetic to Waldorf Principles such as calling teachers by their first names, as part of developing positive and unique relations with children. The majority of parents did not want a school uniform to be introduced as they believe that the individuality of children should be celebrated. As in other settings, some parents felt that screen use should be 'minimal' and that the children should not 'feel tested'. Children, on the other hand, wanted more opportunities to use laptops for research and to learn coding skills.

In relation to our second main question (*What are the principles of the experiences for the children?*), there was considerable difference in opinion, which we expected. Many parents said that they wanted a Steiner curriculum whereas others said that they *'did not care what model but wanted a good and kind education'* (Parent survey response) for their child. Unfortunately, the survey responses did not allow the diversity of view to be heard because a group of parents campaigned the parent community with guidance about how to answer each survey question. We did consider the survey, but noted the obvious similarities in response and took a balanced view.

Throughout our review, we heard that children, parents and staff valued the balance of indoor and outdoor learning, that there should be a respect for individuality and a learnt sense of community responsibility. The notion of 'Rhythm' was a theme that arose throughout the review. Some parents and some Steiner-trained educators said that there was a natural rhythm in learning, in a school day, week, term and year. There was also a desire to keep the festivals and rituals in the school day. Moreover, a majority of parents were very keen that their children experienced: creativity, playfulness, experiential learning, a sense of awe, reverence and wonder, as well as good life skills, including handcraft and landcraft. These feature strongly in our curriculum model and recommendations.

We also found that creativity and imagination in learning was important to parents and educators. These are contested fields of academic enquiry and, as with all our recommendations, need to be discussed to develop a shared discourse to set clear the expectations when it comes to enacting them within the curriculum. A particularly useful contribution from Rawson (received via email on 29th March 2020) explains the pedagogic tools through which imaginative education is enabled. We include this submission in Table 2.

Table 2: Importance of Imagination

Nielsen (2004) writes, 'Imaginative teaching may, therefore, be seen as a generic method of dealing with the sense of separation and fragmentation that is prevalent in today's Western society' (2004: pg.18). Based on a phenomenological study of three Waldorf schools in Australia, Nielsen identified the following methods, briefly summarized:

1. Drama: the imaginative enacting of experiences and situations.
2. Exploration: the teacher creates opportunities for hands-on constructing of experiences, pupils making their own discoveries through direct and authentic experience.
3. Story: prompting suspense, identification and empathy and the creation of lively inner pictures and the opportunity to link these to their own inner experiences.
4. Ritual and routine: unconscious learning through habits and dispositions, through which images are constructed over time.
5. Form drawing: unconscious learning about space and movement, symmetry and balance, and active imagination to visualize the forms.
6. Arts of all kinds: creating images in different media.
7. Pictorial discussion: through carefully guided discussion, pupils come to understand and accept that others have other images, and that multiple answers are possible and can be imagined.

Nielsen concludes that 'imagination is not simply added on as an extra ingredient to make learning enjoyable, it is the 'crossroads' at which other dimensions of being human meet and find meaning. Moreover, as imagination appears 'secular' and inclusive of both ends of the spectrum of human experience, thinking and doing, spirit and matter, imaginative teaching provides common ground between past and present preferences for either scientific or religious schooling, vocational or liberal education, materialism or spiritualism'(Nielsen, 2004: p.263). Furthermore, these aspects of imagination are embedded in the pedagogical methods "used in imaginative transaction and are part of the transaction itself, while whole-of-school routines, buildings, and the general management of children constitute the forum in which the transaction takes place' (2004: p.261).

We believe that the model we present herein is consistent with the seven pedagogic tools in Table 2. We strongly recommend that expectations are clearly set in relation to imaginative teaching. These should be set by the leadership teams in schools, if they are to be adopted, so that children experience high-quality

learning, with clear progression and outcomes documented. We saw this, for example, in the excellent work of the Handcraft teacher in Avanti Gardens. There is also a clear need for high-quality professional development to ensure a consistent understanding and practice. High quality imaginative teaching and learning must also demonstrate impact on children's learning, knowledge and skill development.

We noted concerns that the National Curriculum could produce a narrow educational experience. However, as state-funded schools, there is a national expectation that children reach 'age-related goals', in primary school particularly, related to core English and Maths skills and knowledge. We note that this definition of age-related will be in conflict with the view of parents who advocate a Steiner curriculum definition of 'age appropriateness'. We noted concern about the perceived rapid process of the teaching of reading, writing and maths, and concern about age-appropriate learning. We could not identify robust evidence-informed clarity about what 'age-appropriate' learning was. However, we have seen the National Curriculum implemented in creative ways, and suggest that high standards in reading, writing and maths do not need to oppose high-quality creative, outdoor and experiential learning. To do both well requires leadership, clear professional standards, a plan for curriculum implementation and high-quality professional development. We propose that the National Curriculum expectations are adopted because schools are judged on this basis. However, we strongly advocate creative and bold leadership in designing the detail of the curriculum so that it is balanced, distinctively different and accommodates a values-led approach.

We noted, from many parents, a dislike for phonics because it is perceived to discourage reading for pleasure and, moreover, that it moves children from experiencing the world through embodied learning to intellectualising the world through text and language – moving from the heart to the head too quickly. Whilst there are considerable arguments for and against the teaching of phonics, we conclude that a balance of high-quality phonics teaching and the development of engaging reading for pleasure cultures will move towards the importance of 'whole to part' teaching and learning (one example of an integrated phonics programme is [here](#)). We recommend a rich reading for pleasure culture that also includes a phonics scheme adopted across all schools (see [link](#)).

Parents said that they were concerned about inclusion and the behavior management systems and cultures of inclusion in each school. This was particularly voiced by parents of children with special educational needs or disabilities. We were not in a position to make judgements about behavior management systems, although we have recommended a more values-aligned approach to the evidence we noted in the schools. From a curriculum and pedagogic perspective, we challenge the inclusivity of a fixed view of age-appropriate learning. Such a view does not allow individuals to explore the world in a way that is best for them. For example, some children said they wanted to play football but were told that it was not age appropriate for them. In another example, one response from a parent said, *'My child has started to teach herself how to read because the school was not helping her with it'*. A number of respondents said that their children had been held back because of fixed ideas about age-appropriateness. We recommend a curriculum that is truly inclusive because it is based on respectful relationships and appropriate behaviour management that supports children in improving their pro-social behaviours.

There is a concern that assessments could damage the learning experience for children and result in stressed children. Assessment is a key feature of teaching and learning. Daily assessment of learning is essential for teachers to plan to address misconceptions or to challenge children in next lessons. Testing in primary schools does not need to be oppressive or stressful if a culture of learning and growth mind-set learning is developed. School leaders are best placed to decide how assessment should be developed in each school, but we advocate that assessment for learning practices be adopted (see [link](#)). It is also important that children are involved in self-assessment practices.

Technology can play an important part in education but it can also be overused. Schools should regularly review how technology is employed, with clear learning expectations. Parents were worried that technology would replace the direct relationship between teacher and learner. We agree that relationships are key in creating positive learning cultures. We recommend a balanced and critical view of using technology.

Globally, we understand that there are many high-performing jurisdictions where children have a later school starting age than in the UK. Such policies are contextually situated in different cultures and political

systems. Whilst we acknowledge the value of ongoing educational debates around the optimal age for children to begin formal learning, as part of funding agreements with government, schools in England are regardless required to follow statutory assessments such as the Early Learning Goals in Reception and the Phonics Check in Year 1. Such prescription of some curriculum content, however, does not necessitate that children have a narrowed experience in school; a well-planned curriculum accompanied by skillful teaching brings alive learning that can be inspiring and meaningful for children, as well as reaching government expectations.

Recommendations

In this section, we describe the new curriculum model which was formed following analysis of the soundings and education research (for example: Alexander, 2010). We found there to be considerable synergy between the Steiner Waldorf model and the Avanti Way model, although we recognise that in the implementation of the curriculum there will be differences. We believe that the model is underpinned by strong principles and theories of learning that essentially recognise the *whole child education* rather than a narrow view of education as purely academic and intellectual.

Recommendation 1: Adopting a new curriculum model

1.1 A new model

We acknowledge that this model will not meet the expectations of parents who want a Steiner curriculum, but we have attempted to design one that attends to the whole child in a balanced way. Figure 2 (overleaf) used the information we gathered from the review visits, the submissions from parents and teachers via email and the discussions with children. We also used the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) evidence to inform our design process and to define the subject domains of learning. The starting point was the answers to question one: *What kind of humans do we want our learners to become?* The second question *What are the principles of the experiences for the children?* informed the pedagogic principles (i.e. outdoor learning as a pedagogic tool).

We considered, therefore, that what parents and teachers hoped for in their children's educational experience was in synergy with the Avanti Way. The purpose of the Avanti Schools is to develop '*Well Rounded Human Beings*'. This is the core of the curriculum and supported by the three foundations of Educational Excellence, Spiritual Insight and Character Formation. As such, we saw alignment with the whole child approach adopted by the Steiner Waldorf education model and the vital importance of developing caring and respectful relationships. Parents and Staff in each school largely agreed that the values of empathy, gratitude, respect, self-discipline, integrity and courage are important, and help define a sense of a well-rounded human being. This is the second circle around the core.

Through the curriculum, children would develop a sense of self and of the diversity of other people, through awareness of community, and would consider their ethical contributions to the wider world. *Nurturing self*, *Nurturing others* and *Nurturing the world* are outcomes of the educational experiences offered through the curriculum (seen in the outer circle of the model).

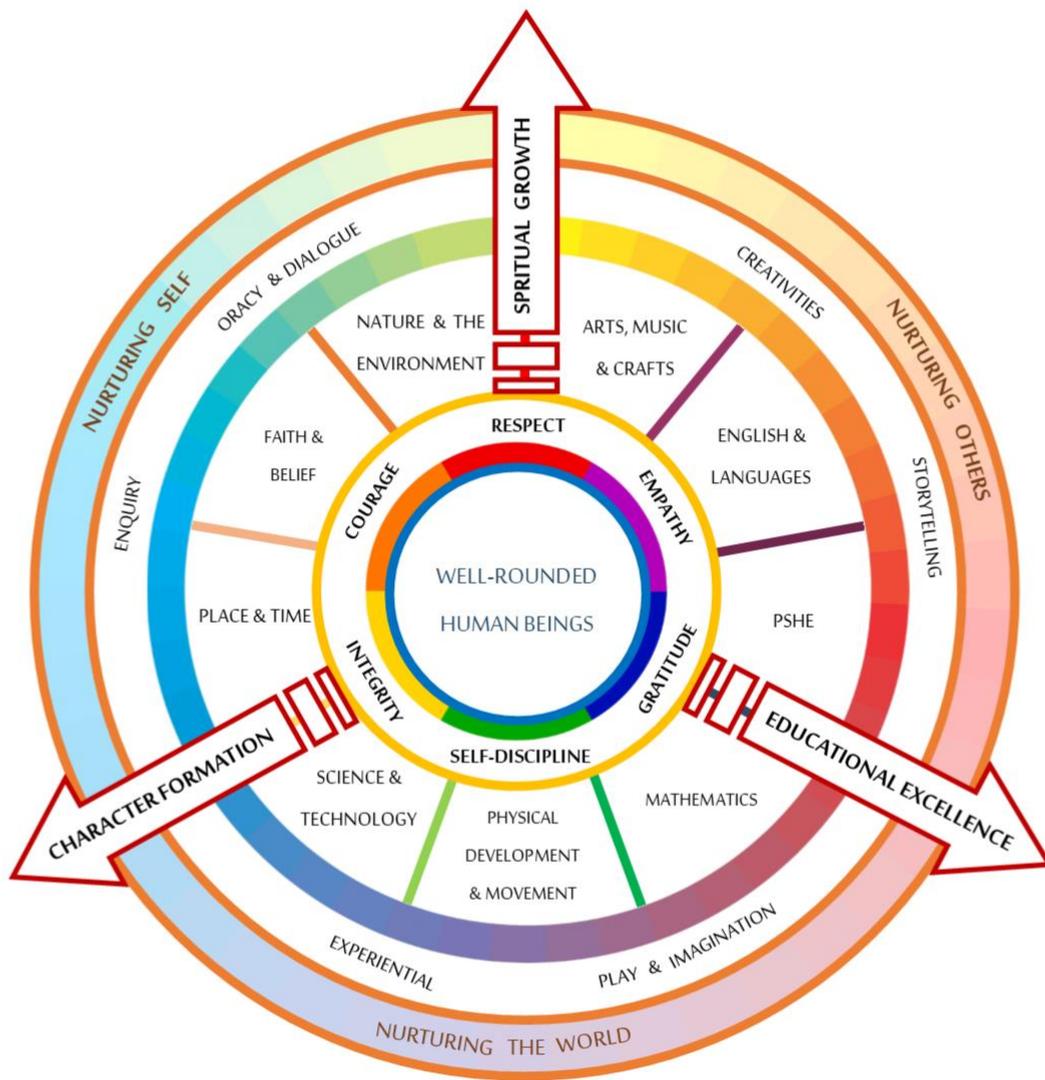


Figure 2: An Avanti Curriculum Model – Nurturing Well-Rounded Human Beings

Through our soundings (hearing from each community what was important for them), we identified patterns in what adults thought children should learn in school that included a broad and balanced experience and that had emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual learning, both being perceived as equally important. In balancing the ‘soundings’ data with research, we drew from the [Cambridge Primary Review](#) (CPR) (Alexander, 2010) which was (and remains) the biggest piece of academic research into primary education since the 1960s. Drawing from both CPR and community soundings, we settled on the following domains of learning:

Nature and the Environment; Arts, Music and Crafts; English; Languages; Mathematics; Physical Development and Movement; Science and Technology; Place and Time, and Philosophy, Faith and Belief. We note that each school will have different local expertise, and the model is flexible so that such expertise can feature more dominantly (e.g. should there be a strong handcraft teacher and space in one school, we see this as being a distinctive feature of the local curriculum).

Nine Domains of Learning

We define each curriculum subject as:

Nature and the Environment: this has the potential to be an innovative part of the curriculum. It will attend to sustainable life skills, awareness and respect of the natural world, building ethical responses to climate change and developing children's agency.

Arts, Music and Crafts: this also has the potential to be an innovative part of the curriculum, building on the strengths that exist in each school. We hope the curriculum contributes to the vigorous campaign to develop the arts. This can be achieved through teaching that enables creativity and imaginative activity (though this is not confined to the arts). Handcraft is a unique aspect of the curriculum offer. Singing should feature as part of every school day to develop musicianship and community.

English and Languages: this domain includes spoken language, reading and writing, literature and wider aspects of language and communication. We strongly advocate the development of storytelling as a useful and 'psychologically privileged' pedagogic tool (Willingham, 2009). A clear progression of stories should be developed from Reception to Year 6 (and beyond). There should also be a core offer of key rich and diverse texts that children will read from Reception to Year 6 ([CLPE](#) is a well-regarded source of information regarding this). The Steiner approach to the learning of languages is valuable. We suggest that this model is followed. Principals are best placed to decide whether one or two languages can be taught, due to time constraints, timetabling and local expertise.

Mathematics: children learn problem solving, reasoning and fluency skills through a well-planned course that develops mathematical thinking. A broad offering balances fluency in number with other strands of maths such as geometry, measurement and statistics. The application of knowledge and skills should be planned for and embedded in the curriculum offer.

Physical Development and Movement: children develop positive relationships with food and attitudes to their physical body through skills of agility, coordination and teamwork. The aim is to develop healthy sustainable lifestyles. Yoga is a key feature of this aspect of the course and where there is skill and expertise locally, this could include eurhythmy and other forms of dance and movement.

Science and Technology: children explore and develop understanding of science and the workings of the physical world. This will also attend to the consequences of humans' interactions with and actions within the physical world.

Place and Time: including history and geography, this aspect develops children's understanding of how cultures are shaped by events, consciousness and identity. It also includes the geographical study of location, other people, other places and human interdependence.

Personal, Social, Emotional Learning: allowing children to develop the knowledge, skills and values that will equip them to be healthy, safe and lifelong learners. PSHE learning is integral to character formation through deepening children's understanding about health and wellbeing, relationships, and living in the wider world. Avanti has already developed an updated PSHE curriculum that is in line with the model recommended herein.

Philosophy, Faith and Belief: building on the Avanti Schools Trust PRE curriculum, this aspect of the course will expand children's cultural and religious understanding of the world. Through experiences and exploring diverse beliefs, children develop respect and embrace intercultural diversities.

In the model, we identify core pedagogic tools through which these subjects would be experienced, explored and taught. These include:

- creativities
- the importance of rich story telling
- play and imagination
- learning that is experiential and also enquiry-focused
- the development of specific oracy and dialogue knowledge and skills

The model is a departure from Steiner Waldorf, but it is not void of theoretical underpinnings. We believe that successful implementation will bring about high standards as well as nurture the 'whole child'. As well as this, the Trust and its educators should determine the pedagogic approaches through which the curriculum is enacted. We adhere to the view that:

'Pedagogy, then, encompasses both the act of teaching and its contingent theories and debates—about, for example, the character of culture and society, the purposes of education, the nature of childhood and learning and the structure of knowledge. Pedagogy is the domain of discourse with which one needs to engage if one is to make sense of the act of teaching—for discourse and act are interdependent, and there can be no teaching without pedagogy or pedagogy without teaching. It is the aspect of education which most tellingly brings together macro and micro.' (Alexander, 2001: pg. 513).

We strongly advocate professional development that sets a clear direction for practice, so that there is a shared discourse about what constitutes outstanding learning and teaching. Questions to be explored could be:

- What is the act of teaching?
- What theories and debates inform this act?
- What are the challenges in culture and society that school education could respond to positively?
- How is teaching fully inclusive?
- How is knowledge structured, taught and learnt?
- What are contemporary theories of child development?

As well as these, it would be important to define what is meant by the following terms (though this is not an exhaustive list), because we noted considerable misinformation and differences in understanding:

- Teaching/Taught/Learning
- Educational experience
- Creativity/Imagination
- Assessment/Progression

1.2 Core and Local Curriculum: Following the Cambridge Primary Review recommendation of a local and core offer and given that each school is a new place of growth, we recommend a curriculum that has a broadly 90% core offer and 10% localised offer. As each school strengthens its leadership and improves standards, this could evolve over time to make even better use of localised skills and knowledge.

1.3 Detailed curriculum mapping should be developed for all subject areas that identify progress indicators. This has been completed in Handcraft in Bristol, for example. A careful mapping of Avanti practice, SWS practice and national expectations could further wed the synergies and departure points between each.

1.4 Subject-specific professionals working alongside teachers in schools will support the curriculum mapping and progress mapping needed. This will strengthen the ability to develop cross-curricular learning opportunities to ensure rigour and progression, because of specific knowledge and skills within each domain.

1.5 Subjects should be regarded as equally important. A balanced curriculum is a requirement as indicated by Ofsted and the DfE. As well as this, importantly, the use of outdoor learning is a key aspect of the new curriculum intention which may include gardening, forest school, cooking, understanding the rhythm of nature. Especially in Primary School, however, core subjects of English, Maths and Science are key to opening pathways to all areas of learning.

1.6 Develop Reading for Pleasure cultures from Reception and throughout the schools that balance the skill and will of learning to read.

1.6.1 This should include well taught phonics lessons as part of a rich reading culture, linked with whole-to-part theories of learning. For example, phonics can be taught within high-quality texts (e.g. [Storytime Phonics](#)) as well as supporting children with specific learning needs within focused small group phonics sessions.

1.6.2 Develop English leadership within the schools (suggested professional development could be from CLPE: see link [here](#)).

1.6.3 Use CLPE key core texts, planning and assessment documents.

1.6.4 A curriculum map of key stories should be created using stories that demonstrate the values of Avanti schools and which draw from all faith traditions and also secular stories. This could then ensure a 'core offer' of texts and stories for all children and demonstrate progression.

1.7 Develop a mastery approach to the teaching and learning of maths.

1.7.1 Develop coherent detailed curriculum planning to map progression of knowledge and skills.

1.7.2 Develop maths leadership within the school.

1.7.3 Consider adopting a maths programme to support teachers' planning and assessment (alongside high-quality professional development); for example [Maths No Problem](#).

1.8 Build on the strengths of Steiner kindergarten practice so that every child has the best start to education. This should include opportunities for nurturing a sense of 'feeling, doing and thinking' – these could be described as experiential learning, activity, reflexivity and metacognition. Connection with the natural world is highly valued in all the schools' communities; awareness of self in nature as key aspects of the curriculum.

1.9 Technology should not be overused. It was evident in our discussions that there was strong feeling about the use of technology – and in particular the overuse of technology. We therefore recommend the following:

1.9.1 Technology has a place to play in children's education. We recommend that the use of the Education Endowment Foundation research regarding the purpose, appropriate use and impact of technology be considered (see [link](#)).

1.9.2 Creative and purposeful use of technology (e.g. animation, film making, music composing) should be considered as different to the substitution of teacher with technology (e.g. overuse of YouTube or apps). Principals and teachers are best placed to make this decision.

1.9.3 We are not able to comment on some parents' desire for wireless-free schools and suggest that Avanti Trust makes decisions based on professional advice.

1.10 Develop a Festival Curriculum Map that represents the diversities of traditions. We found this aspect to be significant in each community, and we advise that this is rolled out across all Avanti schools. We suggest that these relate to the rhythm of nature and seasons. This will help children understand the natural world and encourage awe, wonder and reverence.

1.11 Spiritual insight: Recognising that these are not faith schools, and also aware that parents and teachers said that they valued an holistic education that attended to mind, body and soul, we recommend that meditation, yoga and other mindful practices be developed in a systematic and progressive way.

1.12 Depth of learning and Main Lesson: parents who were familiar with Steiner education advocated the Main Lesson as a key feature of the structure of the school day and learning experience. The new curriculum model, National Curriculum and Ofsted framework for school inspections advocates depth and breadth of learning. We suggest that two in-depth sessions be planned each week (for 1.5 hours each session) which will give opportunities for children to bring subject skills and knowledge together.

- 1.12.1 As such, we recommend that a 'mastery' approach be adopted across the curriculum so that knowledge and skills are learnt with evidence of progress, rather than 'rushing through' subject content.
- 1.12.2 We also suggest that 'Activation Weeks' be developed to give opportunities for cross-curricular learning. These could bring together sequences of learning in several subject areas and require more in-depth opportunities for creativity, imaginative play and cross-curricular application of learning.
- 1.12.3 Depth of learning can be achieved in other practical and operational ways even without the Main Lesson model. However, we believe that school Principals, guided by the Avanti Schools' Education team, are best placed to decide how the structure of the school day is designed. The principle is one advocating depth of learning (see Appendix 9 for suggested timetable in Primary School).

Recommendation 2: Implementation of the new curriculum

2.1 Develop a professional development strategy. This is a principle found also in the Pountney (2019) review of Steiner which was approved by the Steiner Fellowship. Professional development should include:

- Curriculum planning; lesson planning and assessment
- Subject-specific professional development
- If funding allows, recruiting specialist teachers to deliver the specialities of the curriculum (e.g. Handcraft, Yoga, Forest School)
- Learning about the Philosophy, Religion and Ethics subject rooted in Avanti Schools
- Learning about Steiner Kindergarten practices
- Learning about Steiner principles and theories of education through ongoing discussion with Steiner-trained educators
- Develop understanding of Habits of Mind, which seems a key feature in the Steiner Waldorf approach (what parents referred to as investment in learning, sensitive assessment, 'lighting fires not filling vessels')
- Leadership development at all levels with coaching and mentoring for all senior leaders.
- Professional development is needed to support teachers in differentiating the curriculum so that all children are included regardless of their starting point or special educational need or disability.

2.2 Develop a communication strategy. We note that before these recommendations can be implemented, the schools will need to focus on safeguarding practices and raising standards in core subjects quickly in order to instigate school cultural change. This is a key recommendation by Ofsted and a requirement for Avanti Schools Trust to affect rapid change. This will ensure that all members of the community have clarity about expectations and can become part of the solution.

- 2.2.1 We strongly recommend that a clear strategic communication strategy is developed so that parents understand the vision, process of growth and curriculum development plans of the schools.
- 2.2.2 Provide opportunities to develop the curriculum by accessing the richness of each specific school community (e.g. parent skills, parent support, local expertise, local cultural links e.g. seaside, museums).

2.3 Statutory requirements should be adhered to (e.g. the new Relationships Education curriculum September 2020). While some parents believed their school should be exempt from National assessments, these are statutory and part of current funding agreements between the EFSA and Avanti Schools Trust.

Recommendation 3: Integrating curriculum and assessment

3.1 Develop a principled assessment policy. There were many reservations in parent and staff responses around the use of school assessments. An effective assessment policy should lay out the rationale, purpose and principles of a school's approach to assessment and allay concerns about assessment practices narrowing children's experiences of a rich curriculum.

- 3.1.1 The assessment policy should articulate how formative, diagnostic, summative and evaluative assessments are used to inform teaching.
- 3.1.2 Reporting arrangements for pupil attainment should communicate clearly to parents where children's areas of strength and development are. Children should be involved in part of these learning conversations in order to develop agency in their learning.
- 3.1.2 Develop an annual assessment timetable that shares with staff when different summative assessments take place over the academic year, alongside clear expectations of what is involved at each stage.
- 3.1.3 Curriculum leaders should provide staff with guidelines around end-of-year expectations for curriculum attainment, and include with these curriculum exemplification to develop a shared literacy about broad age-related expectations.
- 3.1.4 A school-wide series of internal and external moderation activities should be planned into schools' strategic calendars to support teachers in their assessments and to support areas of strength and development in provision.
- 3.1.5 The assessment policy should document the types of data that teachers will use to reach triangulated assessment judgements, e.g. tests, recorded learning, teacher assessment notes, online tasks, etc.
- 3.1.3 External assessment materials such as standardised tests can be useful for benchmarking attainment, but care should be taken that these match appropriately with schools' curricula in a meaningful way, and are carried out sensitively with pupils.
- 3.1.4 A clear communication strategy to parents should be developed to explain the school's approach to assessment, and the frequency and rationale for its use.

3.2 Develop the use of formative assessment as an integral part of high-quality teaching. Formative assessment enables teachers to gain feedback about what children are understanding of the intended curriculum and identify next steps to help them progress further. The use of such ongoing assessment for learning is a key aspect of inclusive teaching whereby instruction can be adapted to meet the needs of learners. We suggest that schools adopt shared principles of assessment for learning strategies, such as sharing learning intentions and criteria for success, engineering effective discussion, tasks and questioning, feedback that moves learners forward, activating children as owners of their learning and peers as instructional resources ([Wiliam, 2011](#)). Within these broad strategies, teachers can develop techniques dependent on their individual class contexts (Appendix 10).

Recommendation 4: Towards Inclusive Practices

4.1 The curriculum and pedagogy should strive towards high-quality inclusive practice. Many of the parents we spoke with were deeply concerned about the lack of inclusion for their children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. We noted that this was reported in the Ofsted reports. We therefore strongly recommend that a comprehensive review of inclusion and SEND to be undertaken so that shared practices are adopted.

- 4.1.1 All children should have access to the broad curriculum and research should influence decision making (including [Maximising the Practice and Impact of Teaching Assistants](#); [SEND Code of Practice](#); Report from [Cross Party Committee regarding SEND provision](#); [Creating Learning without Limits](#)).
- 4.1.2 High-quality first teaching needs to underlie children's experiences.
- 4.1.3 Professional development is needed to support teachers in understanding specific learning needs (e.g. Dyslexia, Autism).
- 4.1.4 Systems to document SEND and provision would support teachers and teaching assistants in planning and broadening the curriculum for children with specific needs.

4.2 Relationships and Behaviour management: Parents, children and teachers said that they valued the central importance of relationships in the educational experience. We noted however that there was considerable strain in each school; one child shared the behaviour approach in one school explaining that they did not feel included because of it – which is not in keeping with the relationship nurturing that both Steiner advocates and Avanti trust hope for in their schools (see Appendix 11).

- 4.2.1 Relationship making and behaviour is part of the curriculum design because it nurtures the culture in which children and educators learn and work. Positive appropriate relationships are vital for building positive behaviours and attitudes to learning. Overtly punitive behaviour management systems, including isolation and detention as a common approach, should be avoided in our view because they are inconsistent with the values-led relationship approach that parents desire, and that is fundamentally important to the vision of Avanti Schools Trust.
- 4.2.2 We advocate a consistent values-led behaviour approach. An approach based on Non-Violent Communication (see [link](#)) is good for all children, but a more specific therapeutic strategy that provides awareness of trauma, psychology and child behaviours (see [link](#)) is effective for children with specific and complex learning and behavioural needs.
- 4.2.3 We recommend that a full review of behaviour management be conducted, with clear policy and professional development opportunities, to realign high-quality behaviour with the vision of the curriculum. We suggest that this aligns with the values and desire for positive relationships in schools.
- 4.2.4 There are benefits and limitations for children having the same teacher throughout the educational experience. However, we recommend that consideration be given to teachers having the same class for 2 or 3 years (e.g. children starting in Year 1 have the same teacher in Year 2; then same teacher in Year 3 to 4). Principals are best placed to deploy their staff.
- 4.2.5 We recommend the adoption of the new PSHE Avanti curriculum, which attends to values and whole-person education. This is a strong and unique aspect of the Avanti offer.
- 4.2.6 We recommend that staff professional codes of conduct be developed, rooted in the values of Avanti Schools Trust, so that there is clarity and confidence in the way that all educators engage with children. This consistency will engender trust in the children and parent communities.

Other broad themes to explore

A number of other themes arose that were unrelated to the scope of the review but important to the communities. We suggest that these warrant a formal response from Avanti Schools Trust.

- Uniform was a contentious issue, and there were differing views about it. There are arguments both for and against the introduction of a uniform. A key consideration is in the ‘open’ school sites, particularly in Exeter, where an introduction of a uniform would allow staff to identify quickly who should be present on school site and who should not. We have no evidence that uniforms reduce children’s abilities to express themselves or their identities.
- Parents wanted the reintroduction of the EYFS exemptions for Phonics check and Early Years assessments. Given the low standards identified by Ofsted, it is a matter for the Trust to consider whether the Department for Education would be open to receive an application to exempt schools from national assessments.
- There was discussion about the structure of the school day (including the desire by a significant group for a ‘Main Lesson’ approach). We believe that it is possible to achieve depth of learning in different ways. Principals, guided by Education Directors in the Trust, are best placed to make decisions about the practical structuring of the school day. Communications to the parent community about such decisions should be clear and confident.

- Parents were passionate about their schools. The balance between parental involvement and giving space and autonomy for educators and school leaders to improve their schools is vital. Educators in schools must have the ownership in creating the detail of the curriculum because they are best placed to deliver the experience for children. Principals need to be clear how they will embrace the experiences and passions in each school community so that the schools continue to develop as strong community schools.
- Parents liked the environment of their schools. We noted that much more could be done, with resources and investment, in developing each school site. They are wonderful places – the possibilities are endless. For example, the setting up of a city farm at Exeter would support the high level of need at the school. Some parents were worried that the school environment was moving away from Steiner principles (e.g. not using plastic in the environment).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Example of group responses to curriculum review

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of school

Talking Point 2: What kind of humans do we want our learners to become?

- Independence — Resilient — PROBLEM SOLVERS.
— Think for themselves
- Resourceful. —
- Connected — to People — INTER-DEPENDENCE
— to Society.
- LIFE SKILLS. — COMMUNICATION.
- SELF-ESTEEM / SELF-AWARE. — STRENGTH TO SUPPORT
— ASKING FOR SUPPORT.
- IMPACT / CONTRIBUTION.
- PRINCIPLES & VALUES.
- CONFIDENT / HUMILITY.
- RESPECT — PEOPLE
— ENVIRONMENT
— WORLD.
- CREATIVE

Appendix 2: examples of children's responses received

January 2020

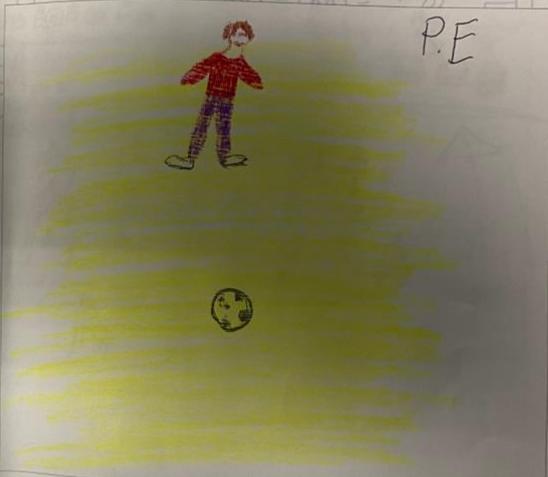
Our School

Draw a picture

1. How your school is



2. How you would like your school it to be



I like hard work because every thing is different and I like it because you get to run free with what your doing.

I would like more PE time because class 3 had to swap with class 5 so now we have 1 class lesson a week.

January 2020

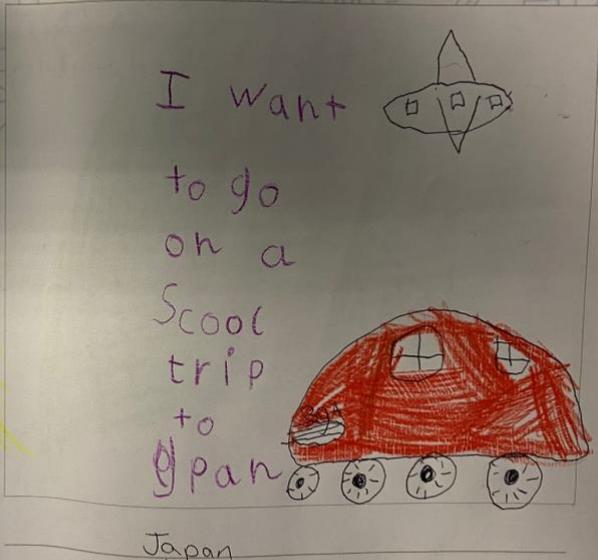
Our School

Draw a picture

1. How your school is



2. How you would like your school it to be



I like snacks math and foniks

We are Laka DAVIM

I X Love

I want to go on a school trip to Japan

Japan

Appendix 3: Letter and Survey Questions to Parent Community

Dear Parents, Carers and Staff members,

Thank you for making us feel so welcomed during our visits last week. The visits were valuable and gave us greater and in-depth understanding of the holistic and interconnected approach that is adopted in Steiner education. We appreciate that the principles of the Steiner movement are important to you, and that this is why you chose this school for your child. We also understand the challenge of the process of change and the evolution of the schools as Avanti Schools. In the questions below we wish to give you an opportunity to share with us your views on broad themes that arose from our discussions with parents and staff members, who made it clear that it is difficult to cherry pick Steiner-Waldorf principles.

We have read the very helpful summaries and detailed collation of Steiner-Waldorf education from parents and also from Avanti Schools Trust. There are many synergies between both educational approaches and, where we have seen them, we have decided not to ask further questions in this survey. This is because you gave us such useful and important information on our visits. For example, that:

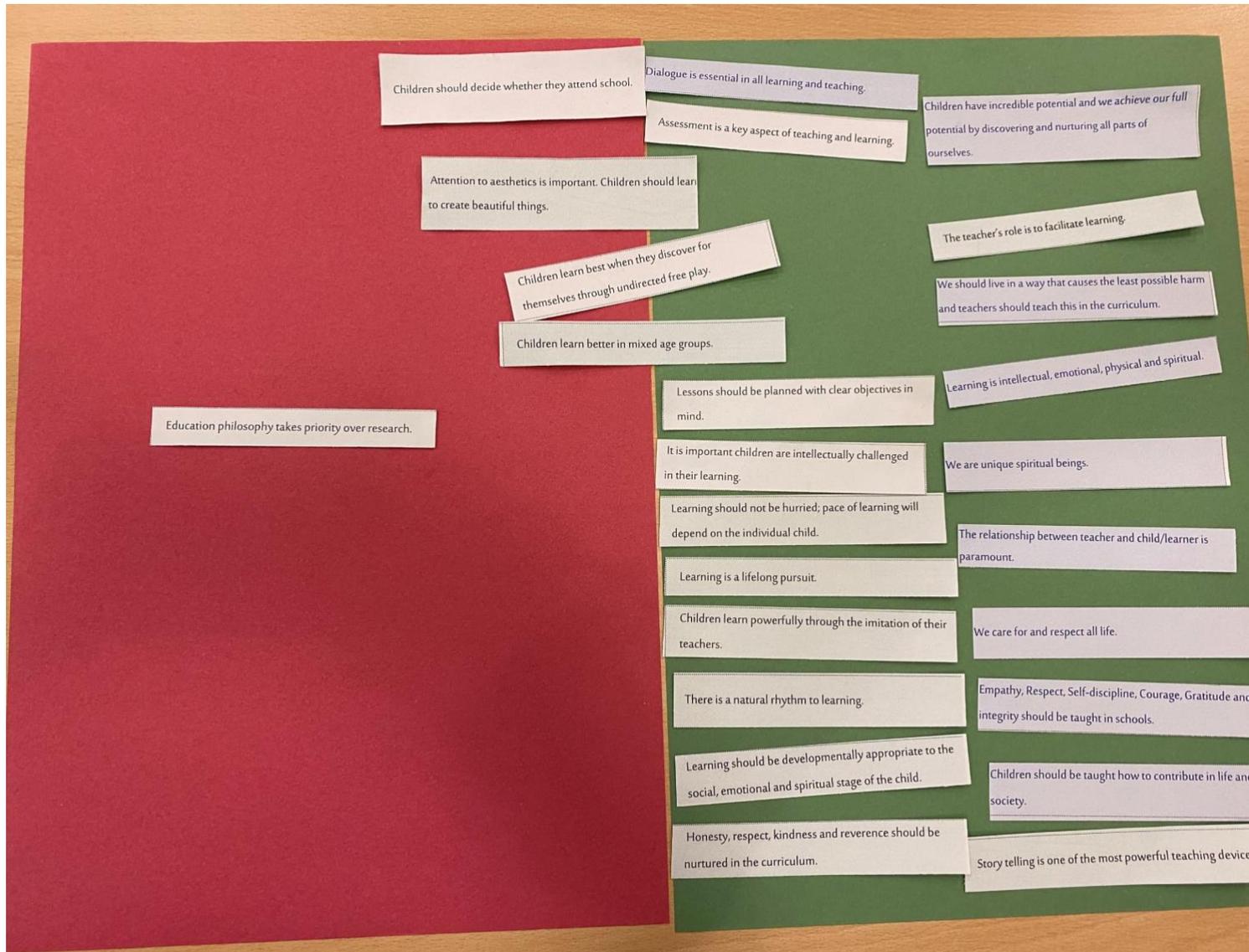
- spiritual development is an important part of a child's education
- the notion that we learn the whole idea before analysing the parts
- festivals and stories are an important part of school life for your child
- Schools foster relationships effectively when based on mutual respect, empathy and trust

The survey aims to gather a sense of what is important in your community using broad categories:

- 1) How could the new curriculum foster a sense of interconnection and community?
- 2) In what ways are the arts, imagination and creativity important for your child?
- 3) In order of priority what would you consider the ways physical development and movement are important for your child?
- 4) How could the notion of reverence (respect, awe and wonder for the world and nature) be developed in your schools?
- 5) What would you expect to see in a school that would develop the ethics and character of your child?
- 6) How do you see technology being used?
- 7) What topic or themes would you like your child to learn in school? These ideas will be gathered to inform curriculum planning.
- 8) As non-faith schools, in what ways could your school develop your child's spiritual awareness?
- 9) In what ways could your school develop education excellence?
- 10) Any other comments.

Appendix 4: Synergy between Avanti and Steiner principles sorting task

Avanti principles	Steiner principles	Other views about education
<p>We are unique spiritual beings</p> <p>Children have incredible potential and we achieve our full potential by discovering and nurturing all parts of ourselves</p> <p>Learning is intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual.</p> <p>We care for and respect all life</p> <p>We should live in a way that causes the least possible harm and teachers should teach this in the curriculum.</p> <p>Dialogue is essential in all learning and teaching.</p> <p>Children should be taught how to contribute in life and society</p> <p>The relationship between teacher and child/learner is paramount</p> <p>Empathy, Respect, Self-discipline, Courage, Gratitude and Integrity should be taught in schools</p>	<p>Children should have full choice about what they learn</p> <p>Children learn better in mixed age groups</p> <p>Learning should be at the right pace for each child</p> <p>Learning should not be hurried</p> <p>Children should learn to create beautiful things</p> <p>Children should own their learning</p> <p>Attention to aesthetics is important</p> <p>There is a natural rhythm to learning</p> <p>Learning should be age-appropriate to the social, emotional and spiritual stage of the child</p> <p>Story telling is one of the most powerful teaching devices</p> <p>Honesty, respect and kindness should be nurtured in the curriculum</p> <p>Learning is a lifelong pursuit</p> <p>The main role of the teacher is to facilitate learning</p>	<p>Learning is mainly about knowledge acquisition and memory</p> <p>Teachers should have the authority to instruct children because they know more.</p> <p>Children do not always learn through independent play</p> <p>Play is over emphasized in the Early Years</p> <p>Formal instruction has value</p> <p>Teachers should be respected</p> <p>Education philosophy takes priority over research</p> <p>Technology has a vital place in children’s learning in a 21st century context</p> <p>Children should decide whether they attend school</p> <p>Policies ensure a consistent approach so that all children have the opportunity to progress over time</p> <p>Lessons should be planned with clear objectives in mind</p> <p>Assessment is a key aspect of teaching and learning</p> <p>Testing can improve outcomes for children</p>



Sample parent response. Statements in green represent principles parents would want included in the curriculum of their school.

UPPER

SCHOOL

We are more than just our heads. The Upper School is not just about filling children up with facts, it is about asking them to become active participants in their own learning process, not just passive recipients of information.

School trips and class play to meet and challenge.

14-16

ORATORY
BALANCE HARMONY
DIALOGUE
DRIVE TO LEARN
SOCIAL & PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY
FREEDOM

A Waldorf Education prepares ALL our young people to enter adulthood:
With a reverence for the World's beauty and challenges;
With the ability to make independent judgements;
With analytical and critical faculties
And the self-discipline to demand the best of themselves.



INTELLECT
SELF-MOTIVATED

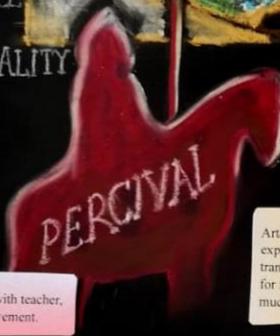
BROADENING PERSPECTIVES

COURAGE
INDEPENDENCE
MORALITY

EXPERIENCE
CHALLENGE
CREATIVITY

EXPLORATION
CONFIDENCE

STRONG SEN SUPPORT



Education for humanity.

Experience-based learning.

Support tailored to each individual with teacher, guardian, student and parental involvement.

Art/ Craft blocks and outdoor workshops. It is the experience of process and the practical application of transferable skills that makes these blocks so important for future scientists, mathematicians and engineers as much as for artists.

Unique, tried and tested curriculum provides breadth, depth and diversity.

Main lesson continues to meet the needs of young people throughout upper school.

Offers NZCSE (New Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education).

This education counteracts the on-demand, push of a button world in which we live

Parents have researched the alternatives and made an informed choice.

Appendix 7: Submission received from parent campaign group (copied as received)

Curriculum Review – Aspects of Steiner Waldorf Education for Parents’ Survey

UND ERLYING PRINCIPLES THROUGHOUT THE EDUCATION

- **Lesson content and presentation that is linked to the children’s emotional, social, physical and intellectual development (from a Steiner perspective) across all subjects, creative and academic.**
Steiner Waldorf schools work with the gradual development of the human being from child to adult. This development follows an archetypal sequence of three seven-year phases. Each child’s development is a unique expression of this human archetype, and each phase has characteristic physical, emotional and intellectual dimensions.

- **The content of the stories told is essential, as they meet the children’s developmental needs on an emotional level.**
The stories, from bible stories to Norse myths, from fables to the Romans, all have morals, but these are never explicitly highlighted to the children. In hearing the stories at the right age, and processing their messages through head, heart and hands, the children take what they need to help them understand the world and their place in it. Concepts should have life: be capable of growing with the child. For example, when telling children fables (as we do to the 7/8 year olds) the teacher never 'explains' the moral: it's implicit in the picture and must be left to speak in that form to the child.

This is where the Steiner curriculum is perhaps unique in the way that it seeks to address the child's stage of being. So, for example, two vastly contrasting forms of authority are brought to 8/9 year-olds and 11/12 year-olds. The former hear Old Testament Bible stories in which the Father-God gives Moses the 10 Commandments; the latter hear the story of the Roman Republic and its man-made laws. The contrast between these two forms of authority reflect the contrast between where those two age groups will be at developmentally: the younger children still experience revered authority, whereas the older children’s capacity to reason is really beginning to awaken.

- **Teaching from the recognisable ‘whole’ to the ‘parts’.**
Underlying this principle of working from the ‘whole’, whether it be 'one world', the whole sentence, the complete story, the whole book, or the whole process, is the need to know where you stand in the world – to know how things are connected and how you’re related to them. You always start from a whole that has meaning for the children, which has the effect of making all their learning feel meaningful and real to them. It’s about building self-confidence, a sense of orientation which is built on truthful and real experiences, whether practical, artistic or intellectual: a sense that you belong in the world and that the world also belongs to you as something full of meaning and potential.
- **Work from experience to concept: encourage children to ‘discover’ their learning, where they learn by doing rather than through theory.**
Where children discover and analyse for themselves, because their interest is awakened, their minds are therefore open and flexible so they begin to learn to think creatively in everything they approach. An enabling environment allows children to learn self-regulation and to discover their sense of self, both of which are essential for effective learning in later years and for good mental health.

An understanding that abstract and conceptual thinking come more naturally to children at a later stage and that young children learn best when the teaching appeals foremost to their feelings and artistic sense

- **Developing innate social responsibility.**
Foster development, so that, throughout life, individuals are motivated to serve humanity with strength of will, depth of feeling, clarity of thought, and the ability to work with others. The educational program is designed to strengthen these fundamental human capacities. Social and emotional skills are fostered in a variety of ways: by the recognition of childhood as a time of wonder, by the family-like environment of the extended Early Years, by the provision of clear adult authority and guidance and by the exploration of global and social perspectives at secondary level.
- **Community-building is essential**
Healthy human relationships, with and among parents and colleagues, are essential to the well-being of the school. Members of the community are invited to join in developing meaningful, collaborative, honest forms of working together. Each individual's self-development is encouraged since it is key to the well-being of the whole.
- **Continually foster a love of learning, where children learn for themselves rather for their teachers, or to pass tests.**
Strong independent learning skills, motivation and enthusiasm for learning stand children in good stead for later life. This is one of the key benefits that those who were Steiner educated identify, and that parents recognise in their Steiner-educated children.

- **Seasonal Festivals are celebrated throughout the school.**
Festivals, both seasonal and those adapted from the culture that is local to the school, play an important part in the life of the child. These festivals serve to awaken the child's natural reverence, recognition of the mood that is appropriate for such occasions and a respect for the spiritual essence that exists in us all. Festivals also provide an opportunity for participation and celebration by the whole school community.

The school rhythms of the day, week, month and year, give a context that is enhanced by these seasonal celebrations.

- **A 'scaffolding' approach to the introduction of technology, with no early introduction of screens in the Lower School.**

Never put on a screen what a teacher could be presenting live to the children

Waldorf teachers appreciate that technology must assume a role in education, but at the appropriate developmental stage, when a young person has reached the early stages of intellectual maturity to reason abstractly and process concretely on his or her own, which is at around the age of 14. Society might challenge this principle, as many young children are able to complete sophisticated tasks on a computer; the Waldorf perspective is that computer exposure should not be based on capability but on developmental appropriateness. While many applaud adult-like thinking in young children, we observe that a child's natural, instinctive, creative and curious way of relating to the world, may be repressed when technology is introduced into learning environments at an early age. ~ *Excerpt from NYTimes Opinion, 5/2014, Author, Beverly Amico*

The use of screens at a later age is entirely appropriate but should be introduced via a Main Lesson on computers, so that pupils have an understanding of their history, development and a sense of how they work. This is in order that the pupil becomes 'master' of the computer and NOT the other way around. It is no accident that many Silicone Valley parents (developers of apps. and programmes they know to be addictive) are sending their primary-age children to no-screen schools - including Waldorf Schools.

- **Following the daily rhythm of breathing-in (focus, listening, concentrating) and breathing -out (physical exercise, movement, play).**

This principle of daily rhythm gives shape to and determines the pace of lessons, based on the idea that there needs to be a variety of types of activity in tune with the mental and bodily rhythms of the children. Rhythmic shape is found within lessons, within the school day as a whole, and also over longer teaching periods of two to three days (the 'three-phase rhythm' seen in main lessons).

- **The image of the human as a spiritual being informs every aspect of the school.**

One core insight is that the human being is a threefold being of body, soul, and spirit. In anthroposophical terms, **the body** itself is a threefold organism of head (brain/nervous system), trunk (rhythmic heart and lung system), and limbs. **The soul** relates to the faculties of thinking, feeling and willing; **the spirit** to imagination, inspiration and intuition. Waldorf education aims to awaken, stimulate and nurture each aspect of the organism and each of these faculties.

Despite a deep spirituality running throughout the Steiner Waldorf ethos, the schools are non-secular.

- **Learn through 'Head, Heart and Hands' at all ages, and across the curriculum.**

This links to Steiner's three seven-year periods of child development, with the recognition that: From 0-7 the 'will', or force of 'doing' is at the forefront, and the focus is on learning through the hands and seeking goodness through play and imitation.

From 7-14 the 'feeling', or realm of imagination is forefront, and the focus is on learning through the 'Heart' (artistic/creative/emotions) and seeking beauty.

From 14-21 learning moves to the "Head", with creative and critical-thinking now developing, and truth being sought.

A high value is placed on play in the early years, imagination in the middle school and creative thinking at secondary level.

ASPECTS OF LEARNING THROUGH HEAD, HEART AND HANDS.

- **All subjects to be learnt through Head, Heart and Hands**

Before engaging the children in conceptual/intellectual activity, ask: how could this be expressed in movement? And then: how could it be expressed artistically? If such activities are possible they need to come first, for healthy digestion of knowledge.

- **Movement as part of learning.**

There is a central place for structured movement, the outdoor environment and learning through doing, across the entire age-range. The school-timetable may include traditional games, sports, eurythmy, gymnastics.

Children need to move their bodies, to take risks, in order to build sensory integration. In the younger children countless lessons incorporating a range of social skills, spatial and rhythmic awareness and body-geography exercises can be being practised at the same time (for example) as moving to the times-tables or learning to sing and move a melody. Movement can also help to connect the whole body (as distinct from the head) with arithmetical processes, and the basics of musical measure, as well as the cross-body movements which specifically connect the two sides of the brain and help prepare children for reading and writing. For the older children and young people, exercises in balance, centring and posture can lead into singing/speech work or simple trust games and drama exercises which can help with building social skills, healthy self-awareness and counter the fall into gravity and the tendency to excessive introspection.

- **Focus on learning through creativity (stories, art, music etc) across the curriculum**

The use of drawing, painting, music, movement, poetry, modelling and drama enhances the learning experience in all subjects. As far as possible, and ALWAYS with younger children, teach *through* story and image: narratives/folk-tales/fairy-stories/nature-stories/legends/myths/biographies/your own anecdotes and life stories, Children crave pictures (whether created through visual art or storytelling) rather than concepts, and learn most effectively when they encounter concepts within a fully prepared imaginative context.

The younger the child, the greater the need for artistic expression. Learning the letters and numbers should be as much an artistic experience and activity as a conceptual one, and the concepts should be derived from the artistic activity. The latter is not an 'add-on' or sweetener but an essential and intrinsic part of the learning.

- **Creativity always encouraged and children supported to create beautiful as well as accurate work.**

The care and attention paid to the presentation of work with the youngest pupils then carries on throughout the school as a cultivated pedagogical habit which acknowledges the rightful importance of artistic, as well as intellectual activity. Beauty means care, which means discipline. This is essential, not an add-on.

Given that artistic activities are vital for a rounded, healthy education, so too are the qualities necessary for presenting work well: care and a feeling for what looks harmonious and beautiful. Fundamental to this is introducing children to the beauty of form and the language of colour.

- **Appropriate materials to support the children's creative learning.**

For example, primary-age children need larger writing/drawing surfaces so that their arm movements don't become prematurely confined to the wrist. Work books of about A3 size are suitable, good quality block crayons capable of shading the large surfaces, and large coloured pencils.

- **Music and song integrated into each day.**

Singing and recorder playing form an integral part of the Main Lesson in the younger classes, leading to the formation of class orchestras.

- **Curriculum that connects with nature and the real world around the children.**

The children belong as much to nature as to human society. It is their birthright that their education surrounds them with awareness of the seasons and natural rhythms. Bring nature into the classroom. Sing and recite seasonal songs and verses. Go for walks. Learn which trees/flowers/weeds are which. Learn how to grow things, cook things etc. Time outdoors must be incorporated into learning for all ages.

- **Focus on the spoken word.**

The oral and narrative tradition is brought to life through recitation, drama and an extensive use of poetry, stories, myths and legends from all cultures, often told rather than read.

KINDERGARTEN

- **No formal learning.**

Here we have time for childhood. Time to weave a tapestry of learning activities, where all foundational skills for life are practised and embedded.

Formal learning of the three R's does not feature in the Steiner Early Childhood curriculum in the belief that a child will learn these skills more effectively if he/she has had plenty of time and opportunity to develop socially, emotionally and physically first in a creative, secure, enabling and harmonious environment. The foundation skills in literacy and numeracy are laid through an environment rich in hands-on activity and play, and where language and communication are enabled through a rich oral tradition

The practitioners aid and facilitate the development of life-skills over time that then become good habits, supporting the child's learning. Children then become motivated and independent learners. Both the

intellectual and physical development of the child are allowed to unfold at their own pace and time, and everything provided within the setting underpins more formal learning, which takes place at a later stage.

- **EYFS exemption.**

Early Years Foundation Stage exemptions, which were negotiated for all Steiner schools by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF) and lost when our schools transferred to Avanti, to be re-applied for. Without this exemption it is impossible for kindergartens not to include formal learning.

- **Strong teacher/child relationships.**

Loving interest in, and acceptance of, each child as an individual, who each carry their own gifts. It is the privilege of the teacher to help each child 'unwrap' these gifts when the time is right for them, with joy and reverence. This helps build a strong human being physically and emotionally, where the children feel at home in themselves, as well as capable and competent.

- **Option of short days.**

- **Mixed age groups.**

Support the sense of community, and give the opportunity for large mixed age-group, small group and solitary experiences.

- **Phonics and baseline testing exemption.**

No top-down pressure on the children to perform, to achieve, to meet requirements. Kindergarten is a language rich environment. Phonological awareness and extensive vocabulary is built through songs, rhymes, finger games and stories. The high level of phonological awareness and language skills with which children leave the kindergarten means that they are very well prepared to enter Class 1.

- **No screen use**

There are no proven benefits to screen time for young children, and there are some known human-developmental risks. A focus on real, rather than virtual experiences, and on face-to-face interactions, supports the child in forming a healthy relationship to the world.

- **Home-like environment**

Children's learning flourishes in a calm, peaceful, predictable, familiar and unhurried environment. Many children are distracted by the sensory overload of too many available activities and too much visual and auditory stimulation. Very careful consideration is given to the impact of everything in the kindergarten environment on all the senses of a young child. There are no 'hard' corners, no strong colours, and all the furniture and toys are made of natural materials, as is some of the equipment, like beeswax crayons and sheep's fleece.

- **Natural play materials and surroundings.**

Toys are relatively undefined, to allow maximum scope for imaginative use and to enable investigation, exploration and discovery. The use of natural materials in play and craft fosters a connection with the natural world; the foundations of a respect for the environment and all it provides. The surroundings offer limits, structure and protection, as well as the possibility to take risks and meet challenges.

This enabling environment allows children to find their own learning opportunities and to self-regulate by learning who and where they are in their world.

- **Children are encouraged to appreciate the natural world in order to help them value its gifts and to understand its processes and the patterns of the seasons.**

The beauty of nature, plants, insects and animals is brought to the children with awe and wonder.

- **Outside play for a significant period every day.**

Every kindergarten has a protected and safe natural outdoor area and where such space is limited, children are taken to a place where they can experience nature. There are many kindergartens that spend all day in the woods or outdoors.

- **Learning through song, storytelling and verses.**

Artistic activities such as singing, storytelling, reciting verses by heart, music, drawing and painting, rhythmic games, and modelling, all foster the healthy development of imagination and creativity, as well as laying the foundations for formal learning in class 1. They are vital to acquiring pre-literacy and numeracy skills, such as listening, vocabulary, memory, social skills, gross and fine motor skills and spoken language.

- **Learning through imitation of teachers in meaningful, practical activities, such as baking and cooking, gardening, handwork, and tidying.**

Learning gains meaning by its relevance to life and should not be separated from the business of daily living. Teaching is by example rather than by direct instruction. Domestic tasks provide opportunities for elementary experiences of science and the four elements. The emphasis is on the processes of life rather than on learning outcomes. Practical activities also support the development of maths understanding and skills (e.g. weighing and measuring, counting and calculating). Handwork allows children to develop their fine motor skills, e.g. through sewing and craft.

- **Teachers work to be worthy of imitation.**

It is not intended that children just copy the outer movements and actions of the adults, but that they experience also the inner attitude - the devotion, care, sense of purpose, focus and creative spirit of the adult. Gesture and tone are essential to this.

- **Learning through extended periods of self-directed play.**

Opportunities for self-initiated play with simple materials are an essential activity for young children. *This* is the young child's work and makes it possible for them to digest and understand their experiences. They make sense of the world by 'playing it out' and coming to terms with their experiences. This child-initiated learning through play, often with open-ended materials, is to be differentiated from *teacher-led* learning through play, which is becoming more common in mainstream settings.

Child-led, child-initiated play also develops children's personal, social and communication skills, giving children the opportunity to practice giving instructions, negotiating, persuading, presenting, performing and resolving disagreements. Play is closely observed by the adults, who make carefully considered decisions about when it is necessary and useful to provide support, scaffolding and guidance.

- **Teachers interactions with children are carefully considered, to ensure that they are meaningful and effective.**

They provide space for children to become active in finding their own explanations and solving issues. There is no critical reflection with the children. This supports a sense of wellbeing and the ability to self-regulate.

- **Learning through head, heart and hands - but with the focus on hands.**

The learning experience of children under the age of seven is therefore integrated, and not subject-based.

Along with problem-solving and reasoning, mathematical concepts are integrated into daily routine, and often embedded in a social or moral context too. Mathematics and use of mathematical language, for example, might take place at the cooking table, where food is prepared (sliced carrots make wonderful natural circles and have the added virtue of being able to be eaten later, in soup!). Concepts, such as addition and subtraction (or more or less), weight, measure, quantity and shape are grasped in a practical manner as part of daily life.

Painting and drawing help with balance and symmetry, and craft-activities also develop fine motor skills. Children see natural processes followed through, such as seeing a sheep shorn through to felting with the wool, or growing vegetables through to making a soup with them. This is the beginning of technological education, where children build an understanding of the nature of processes, the transformation of materials, and the use of machines to multiply human effort (e.g. using carding brushes to card wool, or a coffee grinder to grind wheat grains to make flour).

The children listen to an oral story or watch a simple puppet play every day. Through imitation and experiencing language in context, they learn new vocabulary, how stories are sequenced, and narrative language. Children often create and perform their own puppet shows to their peers, using the open-ended resources of the kindergarten, and develop drama skills through working with narrative and dialogue in an artistic way. Children use all of these skills to 'read' the pictures in a book, freeing the narrative from the printed text, and developing their verbal skills.

The conversations around the meal-table give the children the opportunity to become familiar with listening and speaking, rhyming and riddles. The integration of these activities cultivates a love of language, develops speech, and allows children time to become familiar with the spoken word – the best preparation and foundation for the subsequent development of more formal literacy and numeracy.

- **Learning through the 3 Rs - Rhythm, Repetition and Reverence.**

Predictable rhythms through the day, week and year, provide security and a sense of the interrelationships and wholeness of life. Children can relax into the familiar. Everything the kindergarten children do is part of their rhythm and repetition, and it aids the development of good learning habits and natural discipline, where children simply imitate the teacher - already knowing through the daily rhythms what is coming next. There is a flow to the day with smooth transitions, often supported by songs.

The kindergarten day follows a predictable pattern, alternating child-led time with a teacher-led activity. The day includes periods of free-play, both inside and outside, alongside a particular activity such as baking, painting or handicraft. The day flows with regular and repetitive activity, such as Ring-time (or 'circle time') which includes songs and rhythmical verses, music and movement. The snack, prepared by adults and children, is shared together around the table, where the mood is relaxed and social. Other activities include painting, drawing, crafts and the domestic arts, such as cooking, baking, cleaning and care for self and for others. The strong tradition of oral storytelling and puppetry are a part of the morning, and usually end the session.

LOWER/MIDDLE SCHOOL

- **Gentle introduction to formal learning in Class One.**

Through stories, rhymes, images and movement (rather than phonics and abstract concepts). Writing and numeracy are introduced with picture, stories and rhymes.

- **Staggered increase in length of school day through the lower school.**

- **Exemption from KS1 testing**

- **Collaborative rather than competitive physical education.**

Games and sports are an integral part of social and cultural life in our schools. They promote physical agility, grace, social awareness, self-esteem and cooperation. Competition has its place as the children get older, and many schools may prepare and enter teams in a range of sports' competitions, including basketball, hockey, tennis and cricket.

- **Inclusion and Differentiation.**

Whole-class teaching is combined with individualised and differentiated learning. Imaginative engagement with the lesson material allows all learners, regardless of strengths, weaknesses and learning styles, to work at different levels within their class-group.

- **Blackboards not interactive whiteboards.**

- **Main lesson taught in blocks for the first 2 hours of each morning.** The 2-hour Main Lesson each morning covers a different theme/subject for up to 4 weeks. This gives the opportunity for: greater immersion in a subject; daily artistic activities; the three-phase rhythm.

MAIN LESSON

- **Main lesson period to include singing, verses, movement etc.**

Inclusion of a daily round of artistic activities which have a direct bearing on the children's healthy development, as well as connecting with the seasons and theme being studied. These activities may include speech, recitation, singing, instrumental playing, movement exercises, dance, drama, modelling, drawing, mental arithmetic and recall work.

- **Three-phase rhythm.**

The three-phase (or day) rhythm engages the head, heart and hands in assimilating everything taught in main lesson, and uses sleep as an essential component of learning and memory formation. Let children 'sleep' on what they've been taught - ie recall and practice the new material the following day or even the day after, NEVER straight after your presentation.

The rough structure is, Day 1. teacher presents new material (i.e. tells a story); Day 2. the children recall the story and do a drawing from this in their main lesson books; Day 3. the children write-up the story in their main lesson books.

- **Main Lesson Books.**

Main Lesson work, during the primary years, will be presented in A3 size work books and include as much drawing as written work. The use of colour is all-pervasive and the children will be shown techniques which encourage pictures to be built up from surfaces rather than outlines. Drawing from outlines is the equivalent of presenting fixed concepts which don't allow for any further development.

To fill a page of A3 with a drawing, drawn from a story the child has heard, requires real immersion in imaginative activity and the use of colour.

STEINER WALDORF APPROACH TO SPECIFIC SUBJECTS

- **Science.**

The emphasis is on direct encounters with observable phenomena. For example; in the Chladni Plate experiment, sand or salt is sprinkled onto a brass plate and a violin bow drawn down the side of the plate.

The grains produce symmetrical, oscillating patterns and dramatically demonstrate sound-waves and acoustics are therefore made visible.

Children are encouraged to 'Describe what happened. Evaluate what they have observed. What are the conditions under which the phenomena appear? How does this relate to what you already know?'

Pupils are then asked to think through the experiment and discover the natural law that stands both behind and within the phenomena..

Thus science is taught via experiment and observation, not theory. The children are helped to formulate their own conclusions and not just fed with the 'right' answers.

- **Eurythmy.**

Eurythmy is the art of movement that attempts to make visible representations of music and speech. It helps to develop co-ordination, balance, spatial awareness, concentration, self-discipline, and a sense of beauty. It also lays the foundations for an understanding of the pattern, sequence and geometry that underpin every aspect of the natural world, from biology to astronomy. Additionally, this training of moving artistically within a group stimulates awareness of the other, as well as individual mastery, and carries many of the benefits of team games without the competitive element. Eurythmy lessons follow the themes of the curriculum, exploring rhyme, meter, story, and geometric forms.

- **MFL**

Modern Foreign languages (ideally two) taught from Class 1 upwards. Focus on the spoken word with the use of songs, rhymes, storytelling, especially in Classes 1-3.

- **Handwork**

Teaching through Head, Heart and Hands across the whole age range includes hands-on crafts skills, including handwork (knitting, crochet, sewing, using sewing machine, clothes making) modelling in plasticene/beeswax for the youngest (clay modelling later), woodwork, green-woodwork, copper and metal work, basketry, stone carving, etc.

Wherever possible 'whole processes' should be experienced throughout one's school life - from the raw fleece to all the processes leading up to the finished article which is used for knitting or felting; or planting and harvesting the willow to the finished basket. The same applies to gardening and care of the soil, including compost-building, weeding, tending, harvesting and either selling or cooking the crops.

- **Art**

A weekly lesson of painting lays a foundation for an understanding of the language of colour. Painting is the perfect complement to form drawing. The latter concentrates on accuracy and beauty of form, while painting concentrates on mood and feeling. Wet-on-wet painting keeps the colours more fluid and mobile and colour stories can develop a feeling for their varying characters and moods. Form, when it enters later from about 10 onwards, is made to arise out of such a cultivated feeling for colour.

- **Form drawing as a precursor to writing**

Form drawing is primarily about care, attention and job satisfaction. It's an artistic way for the children to make their first attempts at writing, including in that a sense that the very act of forming the letters is an artistic as well as a utilitarian activity. It is an artistic way for children to gain entry to making their first chaotic marks on paper, gradually bringing them into beauty and order.

'Form drawing' introduced into Waldorf schools by Rudolf Steiner, is an invaluable activity for primary-age children. It can be used to teach first the straight lines and curves of the capital letters (using movement as

well) and then later on, the more demanding 'running hand' of joined up (cursive) writing where the emphasis is not on bold angular shapes, but on flowing movements. Each letter is an entity, just as each word is an entity and each sentence, paragraph and complete work is an entity. When the children have mastered the alphabet in both upper and lower cases, they can then be challenged to create their own style of upper case making sure that it's consistent throughout. They can then introduce such a style into the capitals of their own written work.

- **Form Drawing as part of mathematics and geometry**

Form drawing can also lead into hand-drawn geometrical shapes. The emphasis is on developing a feeling for symmetry and the beauty of form. These shapes need to be introduced with a story or, even better, can be experienced as arising out of their explorations of the different times tables. To draw such shapes accurately and beautifully requires great concentration: mistakes are self-evident, so the work creates its own discipline. The teacher leads by drawing the shape step by step on the board. It gives the children a great sense of satisfaction and achievement to do this work as well as introducing them to the beauty (and mystery) of the order implicit in the world of numbers.

- **Mathematics**

The principle of starting from the 'whole' can be applied particularly to mathematics. Which is the largest number? One...one world, one universe, one body. Then go into two-ness, three-ness etc using our bodies..(ie number quality) This is for the youngest children. Initially, bring analysis before synthesis to feed the desire to 'take things apart' and also to build up a feeling for a range of possibilities and encourage flexible thinking... $10=5+5$, $3+7$ etc etc rather than $5+5=10$. This builds on the practical approach taken to mathematics in the kindergarten, where children begin by understanding the concrete nature of number, before the abstract representation comes in in the class teacher years.

- **Literacy**

Every teacher has a responsibility for the children's language development, not just the English teacher. This involves awareness of one's own use of language, particularly its musical and resonant aspects. Such awareness of language across the curriculum could include, for example having an awareness of the different ways simple science experiments can be written up.

Teaching grammar to extend the children's ability to manage and understand language in flexible, imaginative and discriminating ways. This will involve appropriate levels of sentence-analysis but should almost always lead up to or contain some form of creative writing exercise.

The initial teaching of grammar to young children (from about age 9) needs a story context whether (for example) the Garden of Eden with Adam naming the animals, or a story based on a poem like Southey's 'The Cataract of Lodore'.

Apply teaching from the whole to the parts, also to language teaching. The smallest unit is not the letter or word, but the sentence - a unit of meaning. Present the children with a sentence (a poetic, beautiful sentence that they've already recited and danced to, eg 'I will build me a boat for my sailing o'er the beautiful billowing sea.') then go to town analysing it. This perfectly illustrates the use, first of the musical forces (in this case 'dreamy' and 'flowing') followed by the formative ones. Then go on to an extension exercise, discussing what they are going to 'build': they draw it and then adapt the sentence..eg 'I will build me (a car) for my (racing)...'

OTHER ASPECTS

- **No uniform**
- **Calm environment, which isn't over-stimulating.**

- **Minimal testing with observation as the foundation for assessment.**

The unique qualities of each child can be observed and described, but not always measured. The development of every pupil is closely monitored, mainly through ongoing formative assessment and in-depth study. An emphasis on formative and on-going assessment reduces the dependence on, and the anxiety related to, testing. Teachers and parents work closely together in order to build a picture of the child that helps everyone to understand and support each child's development. Parents receive a detailed written-report at the end of each school year.

- **Behaviour management based on fostering an intrinsic desire to behave, rather than punishment/reward systems.**

- **Reward-based motivation to learn is avoided.**

The child's satisfaction is gained from working to the best of his/her own ability, and not by ranking against/comparison with other pupils.

- **Minimal wireless use in the school site.**

TEACHERS

- **All teachers study Steiner Waldorf Education.**

This is necessary so that all teachers understand the Steiner approach to child-development, as well as other key elements that also inform and underpin the curriculum and pedagogy.

- **Teachers are committed to their own (personal) ongoing spiritual development.**

Members of the faculty, staff, and board, work in an ongoing way to cultivate their spiritual development with the help of anthroposophical and other study. Opportunities for shared educational study, artistic activity, mentoring, and research to further this growth and development in service to the students.

- **Teachers lead by example.**

In kindergarten this means the children imitate their teachers as they go about their 'purposeful work', such as cooking, gardening, sewing, tidying.

In the classes the teacher in their creativity (as in everything else) needs to model good practice. An artistic use of colour and indications of drawing techniques require practice, good quality chalks and a blackboard! The teacher cannot expect of the children what s/he herself is not prepared to demonstrate.

- **A strong connection is fostered between teachers and parents.**

Child development is discussed as much as academic progress, in both education and parents' meetings.

- **A mutually-respectful two-way relationship between children and teachers is essential.**

An emphasis is put on the central importance of human relationships in education: teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil. Teachers are addressed by their first names. Children start and end the day shaking hands with their teacher. Respect is always shown for children's work

- **Class teacher stays with same class for a number of years.**

Enduring human relationships between students and their teachers and among the children themselves are at the heart of Waldorf education. The teachers' task is to work with the developing individuality of each student and with each class as a whole, within the context of the entire school. These relationships gain in depth and stability when they are cultivated over multiple years.

- **Kindergarten teachers stay with the same mixed-age group.**

Younger siblings joining the same kindergarten their older siblings were part of (wherever possible), and thus have the same Kindergarten teacher, developing and strengthening the connections between families and teachers.

- **Creative teaching across the curriculum**

Subject teachers should not be defined by their subjects in purely academic ways, but conscious of the needs of the children in front of them which may include the need to do things not subject-related (like move or sing or 'breathe out' in other ways) though ideally, each subject should be able to include hands-on or artistic activities as well as more academic approaches.

Autonomy of the teachers in how they teach.

A high level of creative autonomy is necessary for teachers to be able to respond to the changing needs of the individual children and the class as a whole. This is successful and effective where teachers are highly trained in Steiner pedagogy, remain with the class for a number of years, work closely with colleagues and engage in regular reflective practise

Job is to understand the children and their potential.

Role of the teacher understood as a sacred task in helping each child's soul and spirit grow, which underpins the commitment to each pupil and is the basis of sustaining the class teacher-pupil relationship over eight years. Approaches such as individual and collective child studies support this.

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Compiled and written by Evie Pace

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Steiner Schools in England, Woods, Ashley and Woods 2005.

Appendix 8: Key distinctive features of Steiner education

The key distinctive features that are interrelated and form a coherent whole in Steiner education include:

- a spiritual and pedagogical anthropology that calls for quite distinct learning styles up to second dentition, from there to puberty and thereafter;
- very different teacher roles in early years, primary and secondary;
- heterogeneous and integrated year age groups as basic learning unit – the Waldorf class;
- class teacher, whole class teaching the main lesson throughout the primary classes;
- the block teaching including the main lesson as a holistic, integrate, interdisciplinary theme-based focus for four weeks;
- the importance of rhythm in learning: distinct learning stages over several days going from rich experience, through recall, shared concepts, practice, developing ability and transformative learning;
- curriculum is based on an interpretation of developmental tasks deemed best suited to the sequential holistic development of children in the given societal circumstances;
- phased learning model, main lesson block teaching, a spiral curriculum with living concepts that grow;
- use of pictorial, narrative approach, cultivating imagination as a form of intuitive knowing;
- the experiential and phenomenological approach that allows children and young people to have authentic experiences and make shared meanings in the learning community;
- symptomatic and hermeneutic learning approaches in the humanities;
- teacher learning through case studies and practitioner research, or any link to the wider Waldorf discourse;
- self-development of the teacher.

Source: Dr Martyn Rawson (Comments to report draft, 29th March 2020, received via email)

Appendix 9: Example timetable for creating a balanced curriculum

AM	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
30 minutes	Welcome				
	Singing				
	Mindfulness / Yoga				
	Physical Development and Movement				
1 hour	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths
	B	R	E	A	K
30 minutes	Handwriting, Phonics, Spelling & Reading	Handwriting, Phonics, Spelling & Reading	Handwriting, Phonics, Spelling & Reading	Handwriting, Phonics, Spelling & Reading	Handwriting, Phonics, Spelling & Reading
1 hour	English Storytelling & Drama	English Storytelling & Drama	English Storytelling & Drama	English Storytelling & Drama	English Storytelling & Drama
30 -45 minutes	Languages	Personal, Social, Health & Emotional Learning	Place & Time	Arts Music & Crafts	Faith & Belief
1.5 hours	L	U	N	C	H
	Physical Development & Movement	Cross-curriculum mastery session	Arts Music & Crafts	Cross-curriculum mastery session	Science & Technology Nature & the Environment
	Assemblies / Read aloud stories				
	Home routine				

Appendix 10: Example of school formative assessment strategies and techniques

<i>Sharing Learning Intentions and Success Criteria</i>	<i>Feedback that moves learning forward</i>	<i>Questioning and discussion that elicits evidence of learning</i>	<i>Students as owners of their own learning</i>	<i>Peers as instructional resources</i>
Learning Intentions	Facilitative and directive verbal feedback	Questioning and Dialogue: e.g. Think-Pair-Share	Student and teacher negotiated choice of challenge task-level	Peer assessment techniques e.g. 'two stars and a wish'
Success Criteria	Marking Policy: Identifying success Next steps Correction guidance Task-learning prompt	Questioning to Challenge e.g. 'Pose, Pause, Pounce, Bounce' Lollipop sticks	Self-assessment systems	Gallery critique
Exemplars: Comparing 'excellent' and 'poor' quality	Reflective questioning prompt Meta-learning skills prompt	All-student response systems (e.g. mini-whiteboards / voting systems)		Pupil-led querying and elaboration

Appendix 11: One school's behaviour system

Phase	Consequence of 'crossing the line'	Support	Who is responsible?	Who else is involved	External Agencies
Teacher Phase	Detention Lower school – Breaktime 10 mins Middle School – lunchtime 20 mins Upper School – after school 30 mins	Pastoral support from class teacher in regular contact with parents, supported by Assistant Heads/stage lead.	Class teacher	Parents	
Inclusion Phase 1	Senior detention – after school 1 hour	Green Card (allowing to exit class to a safe space to self-regulate) Green Report (positive) reviewed daily by teacher and weekly by AH Student Support Plan will be drawn up in an SSP meeting with parents	Assistant Head – stage lead (Upper school lead etc)	Parents Class teacher	
Inclusion Phase 2	Isolation – Half day, whole day, 2 days.	EHA may be completed SSP review Yellow report – reviewed daily by Assistant Head. Assessment by SENDco	Assistant Head (Pastoral and Behaviour)	Parents Class teacher Stage Lead SENDco	TAS referral Counselling referral
Inclusion Phase 3	Fixed term Exclusion (1 -5 days)	Update EHA SSP review Red report - reviewed daily by Vice Principal. Weekly Pastoral meeting with AH	Vice Principal	Parents Class teacher Stage Lead SENDco Assistant Head (Pastoral and Behaviour)	PEVP referral
Inclusion Phase 4	Longer FTE (could lead to Permanent exclusion)	Consideration of full time alternative provision.	Executive Principal	Parents Class teacher Stage Lead SENDco Assistant Head (P and B) Vice Principal	

Failure to attend a consequence respectfully will result in moving to the next phase.
 'Crossing the line' three times in any half term will result in moving to the next phase.
 A full week of successful report will trigger an SSP review that could lead to moving back down the inclusion phases.

We strongly advocate against such systems and suggest that a consistent and values-led approach to behaviour and relationship management be developed rather than explicitly exclusive approaches, evident in one school. We suggest that language such as 'cross the line' / 'isolation' and indeed systems (like the one example here) where children are given labels are inconsistent with the values and vision of Avanti schools.

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The review panel provided the necessary Steiner Waldorf expertise and drew from other works in our discussions. Dr James Biddulph liaised with the Avanti Schools Trust Education Director and CEO to ensure the Avanti principles were clearly understood. Texts that both drew from are not explicitly referenced here.