



MULBERRY TREE STEINER KINDERGARTEN

At Cromhall Parish Hall, Cromhall, S.Glos, GL12 8AJ

Information Booklet

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www.mulberrytrees.org.uk



Welcome to The Mulberry Tree Kindergarten

The Mulberry Tree Kindergarten was founded by parents whose children's needs were central to their decision to provide a Waldorf Steiner Early Years Education. By creating a beautiful kindergarten for our children to work and play in, we encourage them to have a sense of wonder, reverence and love for their environment. Children's healthy enthusiasm for life is shown in their movement and imaginative play.

Kindergarten settings are beautiful; they nourish the young child's senses and enhance his/her well-being. The kindergarten children play, tidy away, pause, dream, rest and are given songs, rhymes, poems and stories, carefully chosen to accommodate each child within the changing seasons and years. As each child grows and changes the curriculum moves and breathes too, supporting his/her development.

The kindergarten is run by a kindergarten teacher trained and qualified in Steiner Early Years Education in London 2000 and has completed a Foundation Degree at Plymouth University (2007) and completed an Hons.Degree in Steiner Waldorf Education (2009) and an EYPS (Reading University 2010). All the staff is involved in ongoing training and are graduates.

Mulberry Tree Steiner Early Years Group

The kindergarten is part of the Mulberry Tree Steiner Early Years Group. The Group aims to support the development and the education of young children by helping parents to understand and provide Steiner education. A copy of our constitution is kept in the Parent Policy file for you to take home and read. The group is a registered charity No:1099561 and is a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. We registered with Fellowship in May 2006. Our first OFSTED inspection was in May 2006, and maybe read on the Ofsted web site and accessed through our website. Our second OFSTED inspection September 09 was against an unexempted framework and we were awarded a Good. The age range of children in the kindergarten is from rising three years to six.

Mulberry Tree Premises and Equipment

The Mulberry Tree Kindergarten's home is the small and welcoming Parish Hall in Cromhall, South Gloucestershire. The kindergarten toys, tables, chairs and equipment are all made from natural materials like wood, beeswax, wool, clay and willow. Steiner Waldorf kindergartens believe it is important for young children to be in touch with the product of the natural world around them. The children through their work and play in kindy, experience the magic of their plates being made of wood, their crayons being made of beeswax and a sheep's fleece becoming a felted fairy crown!

The Kindergarten Morning

Mulberry Tree is open from 9.00 to 12.30 Monday to Thursday and 12.30 -15.00 Monday to Thursday. Attendance is negotiable according to the age of the child, the needs of the parents and availability of places. Most children, however, are expected to attend three mornings, and older ones more. The kindergarten follows daily, weekly and yearly rhythms, which support the children. Kindergarten children explore the world through movement. Each morning follows a clear daily rhythm where one activity flows into another. The teacher guides the children through this rhythm and thereby disciplines the young child's movements. Each day of the week has a specific main activity: Painting day, Baking day, Drawing and Modeling Day. The teacher and assistant are constantly 'at work', quietly leading the daily activities. The children enjoy participating and naturally sweep, wash, and polish and become a part of our activities.

Walk

Before we venture out on our walk we all change into our outside clothing. The kindergarten walk is through constantly changing organic farmland. The children are fortunate in being able to experience the changing landscape and seasons directly for themselves. They play little games and discover mud, puddles, blossom, thistles, ice, butterflies, and calves and watch the farmer at work. During the walk the children exercise their own initiative, developing physical skills through running, climbing over gates, and pulling the trundle cart, they also develop social skills. By the time we return we are often carrying lots of precious treasures in buckets, pockets and hands and sometimes rather wet but happy. It takes a little while to change into dry clothes but we are soon ready for our story.

Ring time

This teacher-led activity brings a seasonal theme through songs, poems, games, and number rhymes. Movements and gestures are incorporated into the narrative which strengthens self-movement and balance. Pauses are included to allow gestures to be held. Ring time is fun and the children enjoy the sense of expectation as these songs become well-known. Next we wash hands.

Snack time

Part of our weekly rhythm is to bake our own bread and biscuits, and prepare our own soup from vegetables brought in by the children. Produce is often from their garden or allotment. All the ingredients used in the kindergarten are organic. The teachers and children prepare their snack themselves and arrange it beautifully on plates during activity time and the table is set for snack. The children seat themselves and the teacher sings a grace with a blessing and lights a candle, enclosed within a lantern. Then we enjoy the organic and nourishing food we've made, taking time to listen to each other. We finish with a thank you blessing. The clearing, washing-up and putting away is shared with the children.

Free play

...is not teacher led, although the teacher is aware and is ready to help if needs be. The children's social skills and creativity mature over the seasons. One year they ask for help to build a boat, the next they make their own with assistance. By six, for example the children demonstrate fantastic skills in building complex buildings as a group; to do this they develop not only physical skills but the ability to negotiate, listen and support each other. They build houses for all their friends. Free play is followed by tidying the kindergarten.

Story time

Fairy tales or seasonal stories are recalled 'by heart' and repeated for a week or more. Stories may reappear the following week as a puppet play. Stories told by heart allow the children to nurture their own images. After the story has finished there is a pause for quiet reflection. The stillness of the children at story time is often commented upon; children absorb the story often reiterating in play.

Collection in the morning

After their story the children help put away their cuddled toys and cushions and sit on a row of chairs patiently waiting for parents to arrive some days occupied with their warm bread, or by looking at a book, or simply talking to one another about their experiences.

Our afternoon session

follows on from the morning session with lunch until 13.15 to 13.30. The children then rest on mats very quietly until 14.15. Some children fall asleep but most rest and then have the opportunity to play or sew or draw after we have tidied away their rest mats.

Parental involvement

You will be invited to give some time to support the Mulberry Tree. The kindergarten only exists because many people have and continue to help. Jobs such as clearing away the kindergarten for other users, and bringing it out again, mending toys, washing the linen, taking the minutes of meetings, advertising and publicity, book-keeping, liaising with the Steiner Fellowship, the cleaning of equipment, fund raising, preparing for festivals and OFSTED preparation are all examples of the things parents do. Helping in some small ways enables all our parents to feel that they are part of a very strong and supportive community that nurtures the children.

Parents may be committee members, even without an official role it helps if everyone shares in decision making.

We run workshops and craft mornings which all parents are warmly invited to.

Parents' consultations

As parents we often want to know how our children have spent the morning but find that our children are not forthcoming about kindergarten. The teacher welcomes your enquiry and is always willing to share her insights and listen to your concerns.

It is wise to discuss difficulties you are having at home, sooner rather than later, with the teacher. Please let the teacher know if there is anything affecting your child's well-being: tiredness, teeth, nightmares, eyesight, and hearing. The teacher is obliged to share her observations with you, particularly where behaviour is unacceptable.

The teacher looks forward to having a personal appointment with you from time to time to foster a closer understanding between home and the kindergarten. This takes the form of a discussion on various aspects of your child's education & development from an anthroposophical point of view and may be held at your home or in kindergarten.

Television

All Steiner Waldorf teachers prefer that young children do not watch televisions or videos at all. There is plenty of research data available to confirm the ill effects on the physical, emotional and social development of young children from watching television. Teachers strive to stimulate lively pictures in the child's imagination and these efforts are contradicted by television's images. The children also mimic gestures they have passively absorbed. However we do realise and understand that families contain complexities that are difficult to negotiate, please though do your best to select and limit viewing. Families who have no television find life a lot easier their children are more relaxed and generally do a lot better at school. The Child Protection Advisor for our LEA strongly advises parents to pre-view, so that a child is not exposed to inappropriate material which will affect their well-being. Some Steiner Schools insist that children do not watch any television at all.

Festivals

The yearly rhythm is marked by festivals, which bring out the qualities of the seasons. We allow the sense perceptible qualities of the season to develop through the children's engagement in play; we reflect our observations in rhymes, songs, and stories. Parents are invited to join us at the end of each term to share story time or a puppet show. These occasions are memorable and often very touching opportunities to view your child's development in the kindergarten. Birthday and Festivals celebrations are held in a mood of quietness

Birthdays

A small celebration will be held for your child's birthday. These are held during story-time we like the child's parent to come in and join us. The teacher will talk to you in advance about the celebration and one of the other parents will make a cake for the children to share at snack time.

All the children bring a small wrapped present & card for the birthday child. Something made or drawn is lovely to receive or perhaps a special crystal, shell of other natural object. The handing out of birthday invitations can be confusing for young children. For this reason, please give them to the parents. Please try to be inclusive on these occasions.

All the children mix with each other during the morning. All the children are friends with one another and are able to hold more than one friendship. We encourage parents to foster relationships between their child and every other child in the kindergarten. It's surprising to see how strong friendships can be formed between children of different ages and with different personalities. The play in the kindergarten cultivates a group dynamic that engenders warmth that flows among the children.

Religion

A statement on the question of religion on Steiner Waldorf schools

“Early years’ centres, schools and organisations of the Steiner Waldorf fellowship ... offer a wide and varied curriculum that aims to address the human potential of each child practically, socially and academically. The teaching methods and ethos include a religious dimension via religious education in its own right and the celebration of seasonal, religious or cultural festivals (frequently in the form of activities for all those involved in the school community).

“In the United Kingdom, Christian tradition provides a background for this religious dimension. The expression of this is however non-denominational and non-sectarian. Steiner Waldorf educators’ world-wide work with principles and an educational philosophy that recognises key qualities of reverence towards the spiritual, respect for human beings and responsibility towards the natural world. Thus, both religious education and the more general religious aspect of school life can support the religious and cultural forms children derive from their families and communities (whether Christian or other), while priding them with the means to make individual mature choices as they reach adulthood.”

Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship 2003

Our Notice board

This is a source of information. You will find it as you come through the door. Please check it each week for details of term dates, festivals, meetings, workshops, rotas etc.

A further notice board in the kindergarten displays our insurance certificate, employer’s liability, rotas, daily, weekly timetables and snack menus, as required by OFSTED.

Practical details

It is essential that your child arrives feeling fresh and lively. Please ensure that they have an early night before a kindy day and that they have a good breakfast. If they are tired or sniffly please let them have a calm day at home. Please remember that each child needs to bring a piece of fruit every day and vegetables for soup on Thursday. If you wish to bring flowers for the kindergarten at any time, we are very grateful; they help to make our kindergarten look especially beautiful.

I was reminded by an old parent that when she first came I advised her to take particular care that after kindy the children are given time to rest and not to do anything active. The children are participating in group activity and playing sociably and we go on a long walk everyday whatever the weather. Our afternoon kindergarten runs a gentle curriculum which is sensitive to the children’s needs, and is available on Monday to Wednesday until 15.15hrs. We also have a list of illnesses and diseases which the children must not come to kindergarten with. Children who suffer tummy bugs or sickness must wait 48 hours before returning to kindergarten.

Any flu like symptoms also mean children must remain at home (2009).

Clothes

When your child arrives in the morning, he or she needs to change into indoor slippers. It would be helpful if they could have a special pair to be left at kindergarten. Slippers ought not to be able to slip-off.

The winter weather can be a challenge for children and teachers at outdoor time. When warmly dressed, the children can thoroughly enjoy this time, but unsuitable clothing can drastically reduce their pleasure. Please ensure your children come to kindy with enough warm clothing to put on, to go for a brisk, sometimes freezing walk. In the winter we wear woolly vests, and several layers, and woolly long johns are particularly recommended for under four years old. Gloves, scarves, warm hat, Wellington boots with woollen long johns, socks and waterproofs are essential in winter. Sun hats that fit properly are compulsory in summer.

All children should have labelled bag (named on the outside) containing spare clothing. A complete set of everything is needed and a plastic bag rolled into a knot for wet clothes. Socks often need to be changed after our walk! Please name all the children's clothes. Water proof jackets and dungarees are available through the kindergarten. Your child needs to change into indoor slippers. It would be helpful if they could have a special pair to be left at kindergarten. Slippers ought not to be able to slip-off.

Arrival and collection

We start at 9.00am.

Arrival may be up to 9.10am as we will be going out for a walk first thing.

It is important that children are collected on time. A teacher will only let a child leave with a named adult when a signed authority has been made. If they are unknown to the teacher they will need to have some form of identification. If you anticipate any change in arrangements, please notify the teacher. There is also a mobile number on the Contact List which can be used in emergencies (0784 22 77 471). All visitors, parents and staff are required to sign in on arrival and out on leaving, there is a form on the teacher's desk.

The teacher will remain in the hall until the last child has been collected. Collection time is between 12.30 and 12.45pm in the mornings and 15.00 and 15.15pm or earlier by arrangement. Supervision of the children is the priority of the teacher; until you arrive then parents are responsible for their children. Collection time is also an opportunity to ask questions or to talk over any concerns you may have, or to pass on information or make an appointment with the teacher. If you hang on a couple of minutes, the teacher should be able to talk to you. The teacher needs to be sure first that everyone's parent or carer has arrived. If you need a longer discussion, please telephone the teacher at home (Clare Benson 01285 831463) to make an appointment. Parents who are late may be asked to pay towards the costs of keeping staff on and the extra costs of hiring the hall. Please make the teacher aware if you need to leave promptly at the end of the morning.

New Parents Advice for the First Day

Leave the morning free, so you don't need to leave in a hurry, or feel under pressure, babies can be brought in. Your child's peg will have a name on it. Please place a named bag on the floor underneath the peg. This should contain spare clothes: a few pairs of socks, trousers or leggings, and long sleeved tee-shirts and a rolled up plastic bag. Your child's bag of wet clothes will be found in the bag or on the peg, naming your child's clothes really helps us. It also helps other parents select their children's clothes from yours. Named Wellington boots will be placed side by side on the floor by the pink shelves. Please can you make sure that the slippers are the types that stay on? We do have a few pairs of borrowing slippers, Wellingtons, and waterproofs. So there's no need to be anxious if they are left at home. We will be putting on our outside clothes for going on the walk from 9am. New parents are very welcome to join us. It would be a good idea to take your child to the lavatory before hand, help them to wash their hands in the kindergarten where there is a bowl of warm water and fresh soap and an individual towel.

Emergencies

If you need to relay an urgent message during the kindergarten session, call the mobile number (07 84 22 77 471). Please be assured that the teacher will contact you if she is concerned about your child and will use the home, mobile and emergency numbers kept in the register.

Admissions

Children may be admitted after their second birthday, as a rising three year old. From three years old they can manage three mornings. Admission is subject availability. Attendance is negotiable according to the age of the child and parents' needs. The Nursery Education Entitlement (grant) is available to children the term after their third birthday. Please ask for an information leaflet. We like children to do a minimum of three mornings. Priority will be given to siblings and members of the Parent & Toddler group.

Fees

Please see separate sheet for current fees, and conditions. Payment is termly in advance, but can be paid half termly by arrangement. A notice period of a term is required if you wish to withdraw your child from the kindergarten in writing and acknowledged by the teacher. There is a non-refundable fee of £45.00 per child, which must be paid before or at your interview with the Kindergarten teacher, and covers administration costs. Three and Four year olds are entitled to the Nursery Education Entitlement (Grant).

Future Plans

The Mulberry Tree numbers have steadily increased and more sessions have been added to accommodate this. We are currently open Tuesday to Thursday from 9.00 to 15.15hrs, and are registered to take children from two years old. Viability is continually monitored. We will open a fourth day subject to parental request. The Mulberry Tree Committee and all Parents and Teachers would really love a Kindergarten and Toddler Building and a Garden. There is also an impulse to start a lower school. Our First Class One started in September 2011. We are continuing our research into funding through the New School Network. If you would like to support this initiative our development group can be contacted through the committee.

Please refer to our web site if you would like to offer support. An up to the minute news about the new class is available on our web site, or from members of the committee.

Library

A selection of books and videos on parenting and Steiner themes and picture books for children are available to borrow from the kindergarten. Please ask for details.

Fund raising activities

Raising funds enables the kindergarten to manage itself on a very low income from fees. We raise small amounts through out the year at our mini Fairs which include Seasonal Activities. These are small events which we encourage by asking parents to bring friends to join in the craft making and other activities give us all an opportunity to share ideas and thoughts. We are also grateful to a group of ex-parents who arrange the Mulberry Tree Festival at a local Scout Camp in Wotton under Edge in the Summer Term to support our kindergarten. From 2010 the Mulberry Festival has agreed that theses fund will be used to found the Mulberry Tree Development Fund to support our need for our own premises. For further information see [www. Mulberrytree.org.uk](http://www.Mulberrytree.org.uk)

Concerns and Complaints

When you want to let us know that you think we have done something wrong, or haven't done something that you think we should have, that you are not being treated fairly and you want something to change, please talk firstly to the kindergarten teacher and if need be then to the Mulberry Tree Committee Chairperson.

The Mulberry Tree Steiner Early Years Group aims to promote good practice in having an effective and amicable procedure for 'sorting things out'. Our full complaints procedure is written down in the Parents' Policies File, along with all our other policies, kept in the kindergarten and available for parents. Parents may wish to complain directly to **OFSTED** their address is **Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.**

