



Stellenbosch Waldorf School
Nurturing Conscious Individuals

UPDATE

31 March 2025

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MARCH UPDATE 2025

Thank You for a Wonderful Open House!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the parents who joined us for our Open House on March 15th. It was a fantastic morning filled with engaging presentations which offered valuable insights into students' daily experiences at school. A special thank you as well, to everyone who attended our Music Concert.

In this edition we explore the thoughtful approaches our Kindergarten and Primary School teachers take to ensure success in their classrooms, as well as how the High School fosters engagement and growth among adolescents. Please also read the attached Leaflet from our sister school Michael Oak which offers valuable insight into the differences experienced between Waldorf and public education.

Thank you for your ongoing support! As always, please feel free to reach out with any questions or requests.

From the Editor: Liesl Brink



OPEN HOUSE



During our Open House, our dedicated teachers shared their expertise on various aspects of Waldorf education:

- Teacher Kuhlman highlighted the importance of imagination in learning.
- Teacher Stephanie explained how rhythm in the classroom enhances understanding, particularly in Mathematics.
- Teacher Toni provided insights into peer relationships and the dynamic between students and teachers in a Waldorf setting.
- Teacher Tina, along with high school students, demonstrated how English lessons can be fun, interactive and engaging.
- Teacher Violetka shared how drama can help adolescents become more grounded and express themselves with confidence.

We were also thrilled to welcome 8 new families to our Open House, with 2 students currently visiting.

A big thank you to our teachers and staff for making this event such a success. Your passion and dedication continue to inspire our community!

MUSIC CONCERT & MARKETING



Thank You for Making the Miha Music Concert a memorable experience.

Despite receiving only two weeks' notice of Miha's generous offer to perform, the event was well attended and truly unforgettable.

It was an experience that engaged the mind, body, and soul, as Miha beautifully demonstrated the subtle power of art to inspire and drive change in the world. As a renowned leadership pathfinder for corporate leaders, he shared thought-provoking insights on how art can transform the way we approach business — if we are willing to let go of our preconceptions.

Beyond the music, this event provided a valuable opportunity to connect with an international leader and engage with potential sponsors. We foresee our school's marketing and fundraising initiatives growing to include many more exciting events in the future.

We encourage you to support us in these initiatives.

If you would like to be involved in our marketing and fundraising efforts, please reach out to Liesl at reception.

Thank you for your continued support.

KINDERGARTEN

Settling into Routine in our Kindergarten class

As we approach the end of March and embrace the beauty of Autumn, our Kindergarten class has truly settled into the steady rhythm that guides our days. The routines that began to take shape in the earlier months are now familiar and comforting for the children, creating a space where they feel secure and supported in their learning.

In a Waldorf Kindergarten class we observe that children thrive in an environment where there is a sense of security, rhythm and consistency.

A predictable routine helps to create this environment, giving children the confidence to navigate the world around them.

Here are a few key reasons why a steady rhythm at home can greatly benefit your child.

Consistency and Security

A regular routine provides a comforting structure for children, offering them a sense of security. When children know what to expect from their day - whether it's mealtime, playtime or bedtime - they feel more settled and confident in their surroundings.

Fostering Independence

As the children become familiar with the routines of daily life they begin to develop independence. Simple tasks like getting dressed, tidying up and helping with meal preparation become a part of their growing sense of responsibility.

The importance of Rhythm

Just as there is a natural rhythm to the seasons, there is also a rhythm to our daily lives. By following a gentle pattern each day (waking up, mealtime, outdoor play, rest time and bedtime), children develop a deeper sense of time and emotional balance.

By integrating these practices into your daily routine, you will not only help your child feel secure and supported but also foster their independence, creativity and emotional well-being.

Teacher Denise
Early Childhood
Development Teacher



PRIMARY SCHOOL



In Class 4, fractions aren't just taught - they're lived, breathed, and sometimes even eaten!



PRIMARY SCHOOL

Fractions in Class 4: A Fun and Tasty Adventure

As we step into a new world of numbers, we dive hands-first into slicing fruit, playing with fraction puzzles, and discovering that Mathematics is much more fun when it's delicious.

These hands-on adventures help the children develop a natural feel for wholes and their parts, making fractions something they experience rather than something they fear. Through drawing and painting, the children created dazzling fraction wheels and mesmerising symmetrical patterns, transforming Mathematics into an art form.

Meanwhile, we observe nature, quietly showing off its own fraction skills, spirals in seashells, veins in leaves, branches of trees, and even the patterns within our own bodies.

Before long, the children begin to realise that Mathematics isn't just in the classroom; it's everywhere, hiding in plain sight like a sneaky little ninja!

Learning about fractions was a piece of cake, literally! We cut it, shared it, and of course, ate it (strictly for educational purposes, of course). Suddenly, fractions weren't just numbers on a page; they were part of everyday life. Through these joyful explorations, the children built a strong foundation - and possibly an appreciation for dessert!

Now, with this deep understanding in place, we slide effortlessly into methods and calculations. No groans, no sighs — just eager hands and curious minds, ready to tackle equivalence, addition, subtraction, and more.

Instead of memorising rules, they uncover patterns and relationships, turning Maths into a dynamic, living experience. **Who knew fractions could be this fun?**

Well... we did. And now, so do they!

Teacher Stephanie
Primary School Teacher



PRIMARY SCHOOL



Imagine

As I walked through Newlands Forest, I came across a group of people having a picnic. Just beyond the trees, I noticed two children playing.

One of them stood facing a tree, his head buried in his hands as he counted. The other child was a few meters away, deeper into the woods. He had tucked his entire body into his green hoodie, sitting still on the forest floor. I watched them for a moment and soon realised they were playing hide-and-seek.

The boy with his hands over his eyes finished counting and opened them. He glanced around, searching eagerly for his friend. Within seconds, he spotted him; sitting behind a tree, curled up inside his hoodie.

“I found you!” he exclaimed.

At that moment, I was struck by the sheer power of imagination. The boy in the hoodie hadn't just closed his eyes – he had blended himself into the forest, convinced that his hiding spot was invincible. He was so deep in his own world that, for a fleeting moment, he truly believed he was invisible.

Watching them, I realised that every human being has an imagination. At some point in life, we've all painted pictures in our minds, woven stories into our daily experiences, and created entire worlds from nothing.

Imagination is a natural and essential part of growing up. Without imaginative play, a child's brain cannot fully develop the synapses and neural connections needed for learning. What begins as simple make-believe in childhood continues to shape our creativity, problem-solving, and ability to think beyond what is immediately visible. Even in adulthood, imagination plays a crucial role in innovation, education, and how we perceive the world around us.

That brief moment in the forest reminded me that imagination is not just for children, it is a lifelong force that shapes our reality.

Rudolf Steiner emphasised the vital role of imagination in human development and education. He believed that imagination, alongside a sense of truth and responsibility, forms the core of effective education. Steiner stated, “Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives. The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility – these three forces are the very nerve of education.”

May this verse sit deeply and encourage you as it does for me as a Waldorf Teacher:

“Imbue thyself with the power of imagination, Have courage for the truth, Sharpen thy feeling for responsibility of soul.”

Teacher Chantal Kuhlman
Primary School Teacher

HIGH SCHOOL: VISITORS FROM THE U.S.A



Building Global Connections: Welcoming Lansing Christian School

During Human Rights weekend, we had the pleasure of welcoming students from Lansing Christian School in Michigan. As a small yet globally connected school, we remain deeply rooted in the international Waldorf community and proudly host exchange and visiting students from Europe. We also offer exciting global exchange opportunities for our high school students.

This visit marked the second time Lansing's Cross-Cultural Club has joined us, strengthening friendships between their students and ours. Despite the long journey, they eagerly embraced new experiences — including their first surfing lesson, which was a highlight of their trip! Over the course of their stay, they immersed themselves in our high school by participating in a drumming and tea-making workshop, led by Rico from the SI. They especially enjoyed eurhythm lessons.

The visitors also hosted two braais as a way of connecting with our students outside school, appreciating the diversity, warmth, and beauty of our students and surroundings.

It was a truly enriching experience for all involved, and we look forward to continuing these meaningful cultural exchanges in the future.

TERM PLANNER

Term Planner 2025	
Compiled: 27 March 2025: subject to updates	
TERM 1	
Tuesday, 21 Jan	Start of Term 1: PS & HS
Wed, 22 Jan	Start of Term 1: PG & KG
Friday, 11 April	End of Term 1: ALL
Sunday, 13- 16 April	National Teachers Conference
TERM 2	
Monday, 5 May	Start of Term 2: ALL
Thursday, 8 - 10 May	Parzival Camp: Cl 11
Saturday, 24 May	Harvest Market and Open House
Friday, 30 May	Bake Sale
Friday, 6 June	Whitsun Festival & Quiz evening
Monday, 16 June	Youth Day
Thursday, 26 June	St. John's Festival
Friday, 27 June	End of Term 2: ALL
TERM 3	
Tuesday, 22 July	Start of Term 3: ALL
Friday, 25 Jul	Bake Sale
Saturday, 9 Aug	National Women's Day
Friday, 29 Aug	Bake Sale
Saturday, 13 Sep	Open House/puppet show, crafts, activities
Wednesday, 24 Sep	Heritage Day
Friday, 26 Sep	Michaelmas/End of Term 2: ALL
TERM 4	
Monday, 13 Oct	Start of Term 4: ALL
Friday, 24 Oct	Bake Sale
Saturday, 29 Nov	Advent Market and Open House
Wednesday, 3 - 5 Dec	Teacher's Shepherd's Play
Sunday, 7 Dec	Advent Spiral: KG
Monday, 8 Dec	Advent Spiral: All
Wednesday, 10 Dec	Advent & End of Term 4

High School in the Mainstream and Michael Oak Waldorf School — A family perspective

**In 2023, our daughter left Michael Oak to attend a mainstream high school.
Eighteen months later, she returned to Michael Oak.
This journey gave us insight into different approaches to high school education,
and we'd like to share some of our experiences in case they might be helpful
as you consider your child's educational future.**

*by Janni and Luke Younge, parents at Michael Oak Waldorf School
Kenilworth, Cape Town*

FROM THE START, there was never any question about whether our children would attend Waldorf education for kindergarten and primary school. We loved the primary years at Michael Oak, and both our children thrived.

However, both Luke and I had attended the particular mainstream school ourselves, and its excellent academic reputation and competitive entry process were compelling. When our daughter was in Class 6, we encouraged her to apply. Given her strong results and the positive reputation Waldorf learners have at the school, she was accepted. At the time, it felt like the natural next step.

Several factors made this choice seem clear to us:

- While we valued the way Steiner education nurtures personal growth and development, we worried that the **academic rigor** wasn't as strong as in top-tier mainstream schools. We had concerns about Waldorf's extended holidays, shorter school days, and emphasis on enrichment activities, which seemed to reduce **academic contact time**.
- We thought **exams would provide a clearer measure of learning** and that the pressure of formal assessments would motivate academic achievement.

- We were concerned about the **limited social pool** at Michael Oak's high school and wondered whether it would provide enough opportunities to broaden our daughter's interests, friendships, and long-term social integration.

- We saw the mainstream school's **broader subject choices** and student-led extracurricular activities as key advantages for cultural and leadership development.

Overall, we believed that moving to a larger, more structured system would provide our daughter with the opportunity to stretch, challenge herself, and integrate more fully into the wider world.

However, many of these assumptions turned out to be incorrect—or at least, not as significant as we had expected. While some of the advantages we anticipated at the mainstream school were real, we underestimated the profound benefits of Waldorf education, many of which became apparent only once our daughter was no longer in the system.

This is not a critique of either approach, nor is it meant to judge parents who choose the mainstream route. Rather, we want to share our reflections and experiences for those who are currently considering their own children's educational paths.

Here's what we came to understand about the mainstream system:

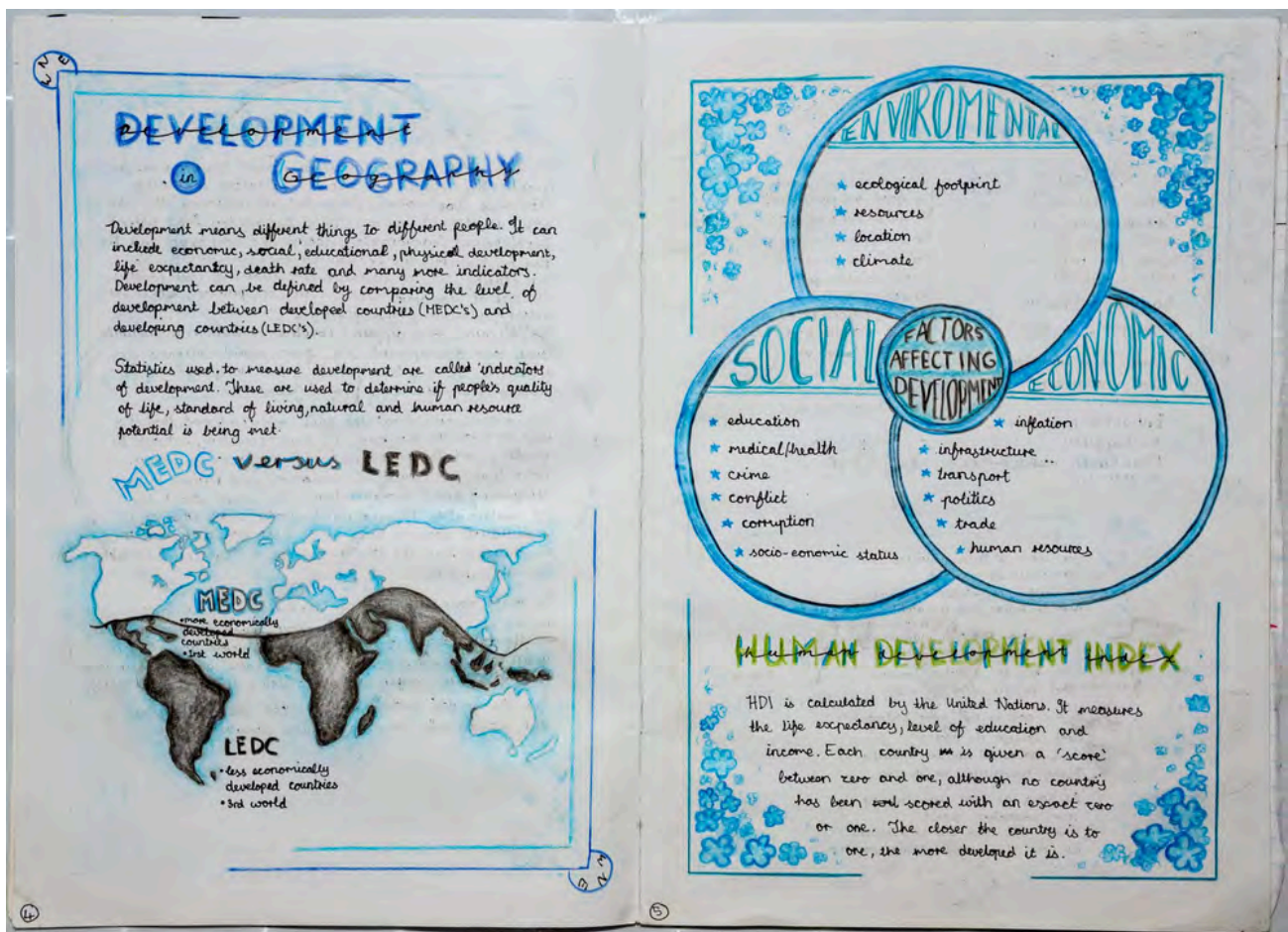
Learning Contact Time

Although the academic year in the mainstream school is longer, actual teaching contact time is significantly shorter. Twice a year, entire weeks are dedicated to exams. Two weeks before exams, revision begins. This is followed by a week off for independent study. During the exam period itself, students only attend school on the days they write, leaving by 11 a.m. once their exam is finished. After the exams results are returned and checked for mark accuracy not to correct understanding. Following these days, students are no longer required to attend school and no formal classes take place for at least a week before the official end of term.

In total, this means that 5–6 weeks per term are devoted to exams—twice a year—adding up to roughly two and a half months of the school year.

Since the school year is approximately nine months long, this means around 30% of the year is dedicated to exams rather than active teaching. Additionally, in the first and third terms, students must also complete a series of long-duration tests (sometimes over two hours), which require comprehensive term-long revision.

As a result, the actual teaching of the curriculum is compressed into short windows at the beginning of each term. During these limited periods, both teachers and students are under immense pressure to cover standardized, examinable content as quickly as possible. The experience felt like a relentless cycle of pressure, leaving little time for exploration beyond the set curriculum—or even for deeper engagement within it. While many teachers may naturally want to embrace student-led discussions and broader perspectives, our experience was that in this system they simply did not have the time.



Pages from our daughter's main lesson book on the topic of Developmental Geography

Approach to Learning and the Experience of Exams

At first, we believed this was how “real” learning worked—internalizing material through rigorous study and achieving reliable results. We saw our daughter’s already strong grades improve as she adapted to the new system. The stress was undeniable, but we assumed it was part of the process.

We struggled to question the mainstream approach, believing that intense academic pressure led to deeper learning. We encouraged our daughter to push through, providing study support. But by the end of Grade 8, it was clear she was unhappy. A child who had always loved school now dreaded it—not because of social issues, but because the learning itself was not engaging. She explained that school had become

about results, not understanding. At Michael Oak, she had cared about the quality of her work; in the mainstream system, success was defined by competition and test scores. This forced us to ask difficult questions: *Does memorization equal real understanding? Do exams truly measure learning?* The answer, we realized, was no.

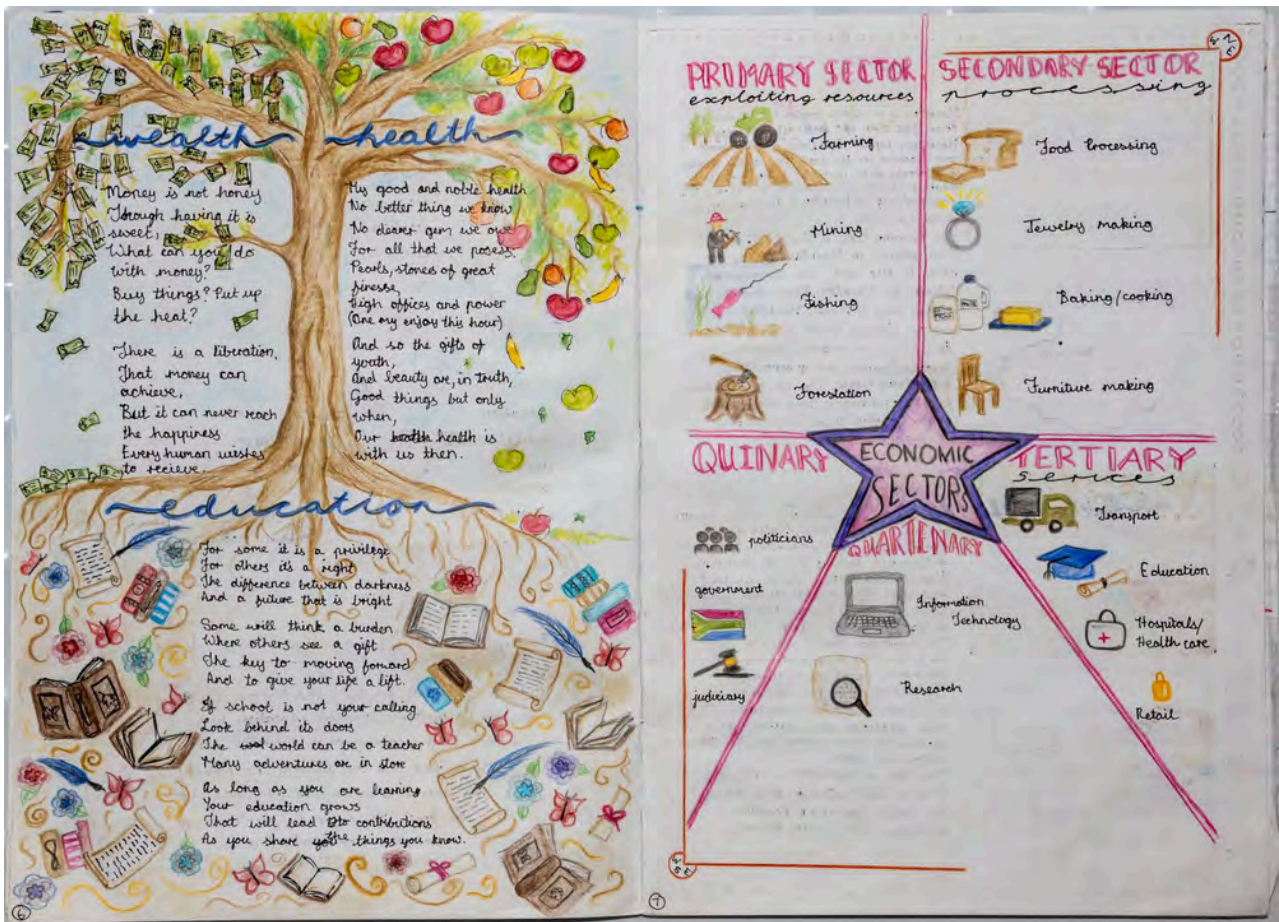
Still, we clung to the belief that a rigorous system must produce the best outcomes—until our daughter asked us to trust *her*. She reminded us that she didn’t need relentless testing to stay motivated.

When we finally considered her return to Michael Oak, we saw that no results, however impressive, were worth years of unhappiness. More importantly, we recognized that thriving in a fast-changing world requires adaptability, curiosity, and critical thinking—traits that were being stifled rather than nurtured. The love of learning that had always driven her was fading, she described her learning experience as “lifeless and grey” and we knew it was time for a change.

Variety of Subjects

We had assumed that a larger mainstream school would offer more options, and broader understanding because of the greater number of subjects offered at the matric level. However, we found that the results-driven focus meant subject choices were restricted early on.

In contrast, Waldorf’s curriculum integrates science and the humanities throughout high school along with arts subjects. Even for students



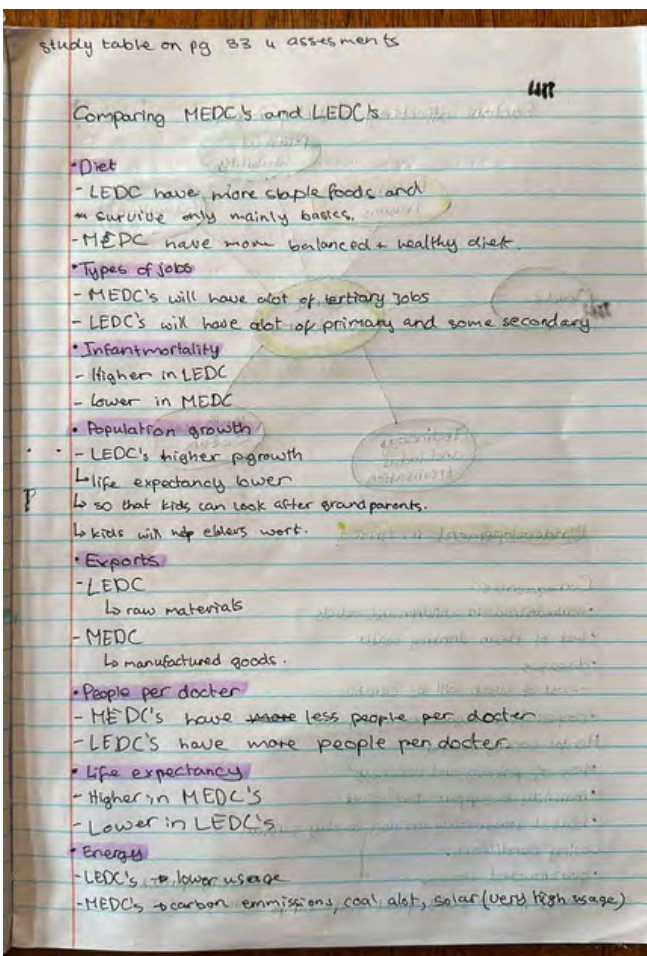
who don't plan to pursue the arts professionally, creative expression remains central to their education, enriching their overall understanding of the world.

Waldorf's interdisciplinary approach—especially through the Main Lesson system—allows students to explore the connections between scientific and humanistic knowledge. Rather than being forced into early specialization, they continue engaging with multiple ways of thinking. For a student with broad interests and curiosity about the world, this system is both stimulating and deeply enriching.

Learning in Context Creates Engagement

We remained concerned about academic rigor and contextual relevance, particularly in subjects like maths and science, history and geography. We have been amazed by our daughter's deep engagement across all Main Lesson subjects at Michael Oak.

A striking example was **Developmental Geography**. Before leaving the mainstream school, she had



Mainstream school notes on the topic of Developmental Geography

covered this topic but found it dull and confusing. This was her first Main Lesson upon her return to Michael Oak and her experience was completely different. We watched in astonishment as she immersed herself in the topic, conducting additional research on Sustainable Development Goals, and exploring beyond the curriculum. She was so engaged it was hard to get her to take a break.

The difference? *Approach*. Instead of passively absorbing information, she was introduced to the subject in a way that felt relevant and meaningful. She felt connected to the material, encouraged to explore it further, and given the freedom to read widely. The process of developing her Main Lesson book—integrating artwork to interpret and deepen her understanding—transformed learning into a creative and intellectual pursuit.

To illustrate the contrast, we've included images from her mainstream school notes and from her Waldorf Main Lesson book for a visual understanding of the difference.

Digital Information

We were curious to see how our daughter would integrate into a system which relied on digital communication however we were shocked by the overwhelming and often chaotic flood of communication through an unwieldy digital communication system running on multiple platforms. Students had to spend hours navigating a maze of messages on Google Classroom and email, just to stay on top of important information. Learners had free access to phones and were often required to use them in class. Some teachers relied on Google Classroom to teach, and one even recorded a TikTok video in front of the students. Media use was largely unmonitored, with students frequently chatting or playing games during lessons.

Michael Oak High School takes a thoughtful approach to digital technology. Subjects that require software integrate it meaningfully, email communication is minimal and specific, and phone use is controlled in the classroom, allowing students to stay focused and present.

Cultural Engagement and the Social Pool

While the mainstream school offers more extracurricular opportunities, Michael Oak provides a rich cultural and developmental experience within the curriculum itself. With significant theatrical projects, critical thinking exercises, and opportunities for self-development through camps and the arts, we're confident our daughter is getting what she needs—without relying on external clubs to explore specialized interests.

Initially, we were concerned about the small grade size, but we've found that Michael Oak fosters deeper cultural and social integration. The close-knit class environment challenges students to connect meaningfully with a diverse group of peers, encouraging them to find common ground rather than simply gravitating toward those most similar to themselves.

Why Michael Oak Education is Exceptional

- **30% more academic teaching time** in the year.
- **Project-based learning** allows for deeper academic engagement in key subjects.
- **More teaching contact time** enables a broader subject offering, enriching education and expanding career pathways.
- **Learning prioritizes understanding** over results, ensuring true intellectual engagement.
- **Students are driven by interest**, not pressure for high marks or fear of failure.
- **Individual development is valued** over competition, fostering self-confidence and pride in personal work.
- **Lateral thinking and problem-solving** are integrated into all learning, preparing students for a world where machines can handle facts, figures, and data synthesis.

- **Self-expression is actively taught** through drama and classroom engagement, contributing to Waldorf alumni's reputation for excellence in conversation, project work, and self-presentation.

- **Project-based study** promotes in-depth, meaningful learning.

- **A human-centered environment** nurtures confidence based on internal growth rather than external validation.

- **Arts and culture are central** to education and self-development, rather than sidelined as optional extras.

- **The small school environment fosters family engagement**, creating a strong partnership between students, parents, and teachers in shaping individual educational goals.

- **Digital engagement is intentionally guided**, preventing the overwhelm of unmanaged technology use.

- **A close-knit, diverse social environment** encourages meaningful connections across differences.

Conclusion

Do we still have concerns? Of course—but they fade in comparison to the self-expression, confidence, and engagement we see in our children at Michael Oak. For us, this is about long-term happiness. Here, students are recognized as whole individuals, encouraged to think critically and grow in their unique strengths.

We feel secure in what Michael Oak High School offers for our children's future. Choosing to return has been the right decision, and we're grateful for the space it provides for them to be—and become—even more than they imagined.

Janni and Luke Younge



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This article was first published in *The Leaflet* Newsletter, 7 March 2025 and is reproduced with permission.