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Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship

Serving Steiner education in the UK & Ireland

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Press Release 8th February 2008

Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship: Statement in Response to Reports from the Cambridge Review and the National Foundation for Educational Research (08-02-2008)

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Movement (UK) welcomes the reports that have been published by the Cambridge Primary Review and the NFER concerning the issues of school-starting

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age, pupil testing and school league tables.

Along with others, we consider the child's first years of learning and educational experiences to be of crucial importance and value for the child, the child's future health and development and the emerging society, which we share.

In Steiner schools across the world, the young child is enabled to develop sure foundations for learning. In our settings we provide an environment in which young children can immerse themselves in creative, experiential, social play. This play is not scripted or determined by narrow 'academic' learning outcomes. In this way, children develop skills and learning dispositions for life and for living: thoughtfulness, care, responsiveness, enthusiasm, a lasting interest in the world and one another. These human qualities and values elude attempts at quantification, yet are the life-blood of meaningful individual and community life. Our educational approach aims to develop a full range of competences through providing a blend of cognitive, practical and aesthetic experiences. This approach is founded on the principle of meeting children in their development, rather than pushing and prodding them towards artificially constructed targets and goals.

While tests and league tables are ephemeral and arguably insubstantial, aptitudes and attitudes are lasting and potent forces for social renewal and progress. 'Earliness', 'competitive acceleration' and relentless testing lead to pressurised learning and have questionable purposes except in their own terms. As concepts they are qualitatively different from 'readiness', 'suitability' and 'authentic assessment', or respecting the child and their learning.

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Movement supports the NUT's call for a considered review of current arrangements for the testing of primary school pupils. Steiner educators are ready to contribute to such a review and to join the debate about the most effective ways for

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children to be educated and cared for in our times.

8th February 2008

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Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Ltd | Registered in England. No. 519230

11 Church Street, Stourbridge, DY8 1LT, England

phone: +44 (0)1384 374116 | fax: +44 (0)1384 374142 | e-mail: admin@steinerwaldorf.org

Registered charity number 295104

