

Stroud News NEWS

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New Stroud Steiner school will cater for 600 pupils



By Kate Wilson,
Reporter

8:00pm Wednesday 4th September
2013 in [News](#)

PLANS are taking shape for a Steiner free school in Stroud for more than 600 pupils.

So far more than 500 children have been informally signed up to join the school which could open in 2015 and there are plans to extend that number to 800 within 15 years.

The school is being set up by a group called the Stroud Steiner Free School Initiative Core Team under the Government's free schools programme which allows teachers, charities, parents and educational experts to open their own schools.

Those behind the scheme say they plan to 'harness all the benefits of the Steiner curriculum alongside the environmental, creative and academic considerations of today'.

The aim is to make the school as 'green and healthy as possible with an emphasis on

movement - which means no sitting on chairs all day'.

Those involved also hit back this week at criticism.

A campaign called Stop Steiner in Stroud has been launched by Bowbridge resident Helen Saunders.

She is concerned that parents will be attracted to the school without a full understanding of the curriculum.

In a recent letter to the SNJ, Mrs Saunders wrote: "The new Steiner free school bid needs to be examined in detail by any kindergarten parents before deciding to support it and make sure you agree with anthroposophy because it is the guiding light of Steiner schools."

Anthroposophy is a system of beliefs based on the teachings of Rudolph Steiner which maintain that by correct training and personal discipline one can attain experience of the spiritual world.

However, a spokesman for the free school team said that although they are planning a Steiner curriculum, anthroposophy will not be taught.

The team say other claims levelled against them

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are 'simply untrue' and are especially concerned about criticism that the school will not offer nationally recognised qualifications.

In a statement they said: "It is a UK Government mandate that any state funded school accepting students up to the age of 16 must offer GCSEs and that is precisely what we will be doing.

"The only belief we all share is the desire to provide the best education possible for our children and prepare them for the world, as productive adults who can do anything they aspire to do."

Organisers are now trying to gain as much support as possible before submitting a formal application in January.

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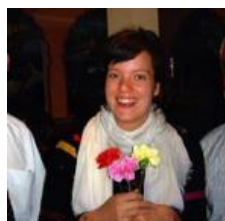


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Comments (30)

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AndyLewis says...

6:15am Thu 5 Sep 13

It is very misleading for the proposed school to say "Anthroposophy will not be taught". Steiner Schools are the living embodiment of Rudolf Steiner's occult spiritual beliefs about children and education. From the structure of the day, the spiritual verses recited every day, the eurythmic esoteric daily dances, the restricted media and subjects in art, the lesson plans, the content, the lack of exercise books, the deliberately delayed education, and the attitudes to science and medicine, everything is Anthroposophical.

Anthroposophy may not be directly be taught, but the entire curriculum is designed with an occult meaning and purpose.

Parents should indeed make themselves fully aware of the aims of the secretive religious sect before thinking of enrolling.

Score: 13

You voted

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Salendine says...

9:26am Thu 5 Sep 13

More evidence, if it were needed, that education should be the responsibility of the state and not religious or spiritual organisations. Are there really so many parents willing to put their kids through this? Doubt it. Shocking if there are, but then the indoctrination of kids is how these organisations thrive.

Score: 7

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Opti-mystic says...

12:28pm Thu 5 Sep 13

The Steiner takeover of the 5 valleys continues apace. This sinister cult is spreading by subterfuge, many parents who send their kids to these indoctrination camps are blithely unaware of the philosophy at the heart of this secretive (and litigious) group.

Score: 5



[Quote »](#)

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A Stroud Worm says...

4:38pm Thu 5 Sep 13

Its supply and demand. There are enough people who will chose this school over the other available options. Go for it.

Score: -1



[Quote »](#)

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kjag23 says...

9:28pm Thu 5 Sep 13

I'm shocked at the anti-Steiner on here!
Yes, it's very airy fairy, but I'd rather have a few more hippies about than more chavs!
I have a few Steiner educated friends and they are really kind, lovely people.
Peace & love people!

Score: -7



[Quote »](#)

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AndyLewis says...

10:42pm Thu 5 Sep 13

kjag23 - Anthroposophy is not about 'hippies'. It is a fascistic and occult spiritualist religion based on a racist view of reincarnation and karma, created in 1920's post WWI Germany. The blond haired and blue eyed Aryans were supposedly the pinnacle of spiritual maturity. Black people were spiritually lazy. The purpose of Steiner Schools is to help children through their spiritual incarnation process, connect them to their former lives and prepare them for acceptance of Steiner's esoteric cosmology.

Score: 11

You voted

[Quote »](#)

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AGarden says...

11:46pm Thu 5 Sep 13

It's worth being aware that Andy Lewis is seeking a substantial personal platform for himself, with a book in the pipeline to compliment his national tour. He has never been anywhere near a Steiner school; it is an intellectual exercise only.


As an evidence-based skeptic Andy considers that being asked to include evidence of successful Human Rights actions by actual families

who have been in one of these schools, even under his comprehensive title "What Every Parent should know..." is, in fact, unreasonable, and he justifies that by openly inviting his readers to doubt the word of a child whose accounts of unchecked bullying have already been admitted by the school, as documented on <http://www.titirangi.steiner-messenger.com>

Meanwhile he tells journalists that no-one could expose such things because it's "too much work" anyway, so that's why it's good he's there to talk about it all the time...

While Andy has some good points about Steiner Ed, his over-arching actions in seeking to dominate the platform whilst simultaneously "managing" the debate, deliberately "disappearing" evidence that his readers are actually asking for, is not useful to real children, and has much more in common with the controlling authoritarian and victimising tendencies he is apparently complaining about than being any kind of an antidote to it.

Never mind the "fascistic and occult" Steiner lobby - sadly the critics' sectarianism and personal ambition makes their criticisms laughable and Andy Lewis' "concern" for children in Steiner is not what it seems at all.

Score: -7 You voted 

[Quote »](#)

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Salendine says...

3:01pm Fri 6 Sep 13

Andy Lewis has written a blog entitled 'what every parent should know about Steiner Schools'. One man's view with some good debate in the subsequent comments. I wonder how many of the potential parents have read it? They should, at least to counter much of what they will receive from the potential school. Expanding to 800? Seriously? that's bigger than some of our existing secondary schools.

Score: 11  

[Quote »](#)

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Thebee says...

4:11pm Fri 6 Sep 13

Regrettably, what Andy Lewis writes and especially the sources he uses and recommends are not very reliable, except as anti Steiner disinformation and propaganda.

For reliable information on Waldorf education, Rudolf Steiner, and anthroposophy as the basic philosophy on which Steiner Waldorf education is built Eikipedia is far more reliable and balanced.

See also thebee.se/BBC

Score: -4  

[Quote »](#)

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Salendine says...

4:37pm Fri 6 Sep 13

Thebee,

Which parts are disinformation? The Wiki piece doesn't seem to contradict Andy Lewis. Andy seems to dig deeper into the fundamental beliefs and reasoning behind teaching methods. The wiki article is light on that part (as are any of the Steiner School websites, I wonder who wrote the wiki piece?) so what are we supposed to believe? I still object to religious/spiritual schools (particularly state funded) and the wiki article doesn't change my mind, but I am open to further discussion and knowledge of this subject, and its not to say mainstream schools can't learn from Steiner schools.

Can't help feeling the middle class Stroud hippies will be drawn in :) particularly when its free. Note how they promote their green credentials, even though I fail to see how the core beliefs are any more green than mainstream schools. All this belief in art, music and drama....well my daughter does all of that through school and clubs anyway without the need for the dubious spiritual side.

If this money is available to build a new school, then better it is invested in improved facilities for existing schools.


Score: 7  

[Quote »](#) [Report this post »](#)

dimreep says...

5:44pm Fri 6 Sep 13

I think the word occult is a deliberate attempt, to muddy the waters here using very emotive terms and really doesn't help the argument. Religions are getting a rather bad deal ATM, as a result it's use is also quite emotive, however not everything religious is automatically bad, quite the contrary most mainstream religions have a very noble "mission statement". Is teaching children to love and to honour, to do unto others... etc... Really, such a bad thing? Let's get some perspective here, please, just because the methods don't comply with the norm does not mean, in any way, they have evil/harmful intentions. By all means make the parents of potential future students, of any school, aware of everything involved in going to whatever school they're considering. I am an atheist and disgruntled ex-employee, just to clarify.

Score: -10  

[Quote »](#) [Report this post »](#)

AndyLewis says...

6:20pm Fri 6 Sep 13

dimreeper

Using words like 'occult' is not an attempt to muddy the water. I use Steiner's own words (albeit translated from german) to describe his beliefs. Try reading Steiner's "Occult Science" upon which much of his teaching ideas are based.

This book describes how the spirit world can be understood through clairvoyance. And that Steiner's revelations about all things including education came to him through his own clairvoyant activities. Need I go on?

Score: 10  

[Quote »](#) [Report this post »](#)

dimreep says...

6:29pm Fri 6 Sep 13

If it's not an attempt, to muddy the waters, then why is the word not used in conjunction with, the far less emotive, science? As for the rest of your reply, when did I say I agreed with the teachings? Acceptance/tolerance doesn't equal agreement; BTW they are qualities you could learn from.

Score: -10

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)

dimreep says...

7:05pm Fri 6 Sep 13

AndyLewis, is your need to skew the argument, in your favour, so strong that you use such obvious tactics as voting up those who agree with you and voting down those who don't? If so, wow, that is desperate; I would prefer a reasoned argument but, I have a strong feeling, I won't be seeing one of those, from you, any time soon.

Score: -14

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)

AndyLewis says...

11:56am Sun 8 Sep 13

dimreep. Steiner's beliefs were occult but they were not science. In that he was mistaken. Unless you think that science supports his revelations that the heart is not a pump, the continents float on the sea and that gnomes are real.

I also believe that when people have nothing to offer in a debate they often resort to attacking the person. Let's not go down that route.

Score: 12

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)

AndyLewis says...

5:53pm Sun 8 Sep 13

And by the way, if you are under the impression that Steiner's Occult Science is not the foundation of Steiner Schools with all sorts of pseudoscientific gibberish being taught, then perhaps you ought to read this experience of a trainee teacher in such a school...

Disturbing reading,

<http://www.montessorianswers.com/my-experiences-with-waldorf.html>

Score: 14

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)

SParis says...

8:43pm Sun 8 Sep 13

"I also believe that when people have nothing to offer in a debate they often resort to attacking the person. Let's not go down that route."

That's very interesting Andy.

Is that why when we attended your public talk in Bath, which was by paid entrance, and which we listened to in its entirety, you abruptly abandoned the event and rushed off at the end of the break, before the Q&A, when we quietly tried to give you a letter, urging you to resolve important matters?

Is that why, on your way out, you stopped in front of us and pointedly announced that you'd call the police if you "caught us anywhere near your family", even though your family wasn't present at the talk, even though we have only ever tried to engage with you on the subject of Steiner Education, and in spite of the fact that we don't even know you personally in the slightest?

Is that why, when someone who attended the talk expressed the next day how sorry they were that "pro-Steiner weirdos" had made you leave suddenly, you did nothing to disabuse them of their mistake and inform them that we are in fact a family who successfully negotiated a Human Rights mediation addressing unchecked bullying in Steiner, a subject that features on your own "evidence-based" blog merely as anecdotes, and as requests for evidence from your readers?

Having hidden the evidence and framed us for your audience entirely through personal smearing, even allowing Steiner people to be falsely implicated when it suits you, you've in fact simply resorted to "attacking the person". Does all this therefore mean that actually, by your own definition, you have "nothing to offer in a debate"?

Score: -4



[Quote »](#)

[Report this post »](#)

Heartfelt father says...

11:00pm Sun 8 Sep 13

There are many OFSTED and DES studies of Steiner schools; these are generally very favorable, and certainly consider that the schools fully meet the expectations of contemporary education and society. These are based on actual experience of the schools, something I would recommend to anyone who wants to discuss them (or any topic).

The school approach is as far from being "hippy"/Summerhill/d o-your-own-thing, as it is from being fascist/authoritarian. Students are allowed to be true individuals to a remarkable degree (they often comment on this themselves), but they are also expected to work to a high standard and achieve an understanding of science, history, mathematics, literature, and culture generally, as well as to master many practical and artistic skills. The combination of high achievement standards and broad acceptance of individuality and individual differences has worked well for my children, and for many others in my acquaintance.

I have friends who have children who have already graduated from the local Steiner school (not in Stroud). One of them has launched incredibly rapidly on a promising career as a geologist. Another is successful playing classical music in settings such as hospitals and other care facilities. Another is an accomplished computer programmer.

A fourth is a journalist who just returned from many years working in Egypt. They have interesting and successful lives. They are confident individuals. They are what I hope for more children in this world.

Score: -1

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)

dimreopr says...

7:01am Mon 9 Sep 13

AndyLewis.

“Steiner's beliefs were occult but they were not science”

By who's definition? This from Wikipedia: “In the first, more philosophically oriented phase of this movement, Steiner attempted to find a synthesis between science and mysticism”

The important word here is philosophy; would you for instance, tar Kant or Descartes with the same brush? Another important factor, you seem to overlook, is the age of this movement; modern science was essentially in its infancy and many speculative ideas were advanced; science and pseudoscience were very difficult to disentangle.

“I also believe that when people have nothing to offer in a debate they often resort to attacking the person.”

Is this an attempt to sideline reasonable debate, perhaps? Would you be so good as to point out the personal attack/s in my posts, please?

Your “disturbing reading” turns out to be the writings of somebody that was dissuaded from the Steiner system and was far from disturbing (you seem a bit of a tinker when it comes to deciding your own definitions) he even states that he agrees with a lot of the systems aims; his biggest problem seems to be the dogmatic following of the teachings by those he worked with, a problem suffered by most such systems, however the inflexible failings of some does not equate to a failed system.

Score: -3

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)

dimreopr says...

7:48am Mon 9 Sep 13

In case you've decided to dismiss the philosophical angle, I shall endeavour to elaborate my point, Steiner's philosophical leanings showed, certain parallels, with a number of other philosophers, the most striking being Descartes thinking behind his famous “Cogito Ergo Sum” specifically the idea that the senses are fallible and not to be trusted. 'Anthroposophy aims to develop faculties of perceptive imagination, inspiration and intuition through cultivating a form of thinking independent of sensory experience, and to present the results thus derived in a manner subject to rational verification.'

Score: -3

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)

SParis says...

10:00am Mon 9 Sep 13

"however the inflexible failings of some does not equate to a failed system."

Good point, but that very long article Andy links to briefly mentions unchecked bullying and the terrible consequences of it. It's something

you can read about in many places all over the web: many scenarios where bullying happens at Steiner and nothing's done about it. Granted, it's all merely hearsay and anecdotal. When exactly the same thing happened to us, we took a Steiner school to Human Rights and we've got the legally binding statement to back up what we say about unchecked bullying at Steiner.

That school, the Titirangi Rudolf Steiner school, also happens to be the headquarters of Steiner in NZ, and the guy who perpetrated that was immediately promoted. A document from Dornach, worldwide HQ of Steiner states that "pedagogical methods are used to deal with discipline", and along with all those aforementioned anecdotes on the web, we've come to accept that unchecked bullying is rampant in schools advertising themselves as a "safe, peaceful, natural learning haven", amid stories of karmic justification.

Score: -2

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)**A Stroud Worm** says...

12:12pm Mon 9 Sep 13

AndyLewis wrote:

dimreaper. Steiner's beliefs were occult but they were not science. In that he was mistaken. Unless you think that science supports his revelations that the heart is not a pump, the continents float on the sea and that gnomes are real.

I also believe that when people have nothing to offer in a debate they often resort to attacking the person. Let's not go down that route.

Hey, the Gnomies are my homies. Lay off them. They have rights too.

Score: -3

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)**Salendine** says...

12:54pm Mon 9 Sep 13

Heartfelt Father, I accept all that you say and reiterate what I said before that State can learn from Steiner. All I would add is that quality teaching that develops the individual is precisely what the state system aims to do (and in my own experience Brimscombe Primary is doing a great job). Funds and pupils shouldn't be diverted from the State schools by organisations that do also have their own agenda.

Score: 7

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)**Thebee** says...

8:03am Tue 10 Sep 13

The seemingly just matter of fact comments by Andy Lewis can give you the impression that he is a reliable source on what he writes.

Already a quick reading of his main article on Steiner Waldorf education and its philosophical basis shows that this is a seriously misleading

impression.

<http://thebee.se/myths/>

Score: -5  

[Quote »](#)



[Report this post »](#)

Thebee says...

8:56am Tue 10 Sep 13

Sorry, that should have been

thebee.se/myths

Score: -9  

[Quote »](#)

[Report this post »](#)

AGarden says...

10:19am Tue 10 Sep 13

If the fact that Andy Lewis, seeking influence as an apparent evidence-based skeptic has absolutely nothing to say to the serious allegations of slander and deception written here, doesn't point to a skeptical by-pass somewhere along the line, perhaps readers need (or prefer) to head down the endlessly distracting rabbit hole of arguments about ancient texts that have done nothing to stop Steiner becoming State funded in the first place.

If Andy had any actual evidence of schools misleading to the actual detriment of children (that he was prepared to use), then clearly he would be doing so, as so many on his blog have requested. The clue is in the oft repeated words "where's the evidence?".



Had that been the case, and the shocking facts had emerged about a certain flagship school's dirty history, would this conversation even be taking place?

Andy and the critics have done the Steiner lobby's work for them and may well have made it more difficult for real problems to be evidenced by attempting to victimise reporting families in favour of endless dry opinionated flabdoodle about occult this and nazi that.

Advertising concern for children but silencing real children's voices because he wants a platform for himself is, in the real world, bait and switch, which is exactly what he accuses Waldorf of doing, along with his other favourite, "hidden in plain sight", which is achieved exactly by simply ignoring what you wish to disappear, exactly as he is doing here.

Not answering reasoned evidenced criticism, but smearing the people who make it instead, is the supreme tactic only of those bent on abusing power or influence, whoever they are, as we all know perfectly well.

Children's welfare is not a game.

Score: -5  

[Quote »](#)

[Report this post »](#)

Salendine says...

2:59pm Tue 10 Sep 13

AGarner, clearly you have issues with Andy Lewis and I don't wish to explore that, but what is your opinion on the building of a Steiner School in Stroud?

TheBee, is that article, and some of the links, a translation from another language? If not it is badly written to the point of being difficult to sympathise with.

Score: 7

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)**Thebee** says...

4:13pm Tue 10 Sep 13

Salendine, thanks for your comment.

The domain of my article indicates my background. If you write to me at the email address found at the bottom of thebee.se/indexeng.htm and tell what you think should be better formulated, I'll see what I can do about it.

Thanks.

Score: -7

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)**Heartfelt father** says...

9:02pm Tue 10 Sep 13

Funding schools and enabling good education to take place is an important societal mission. Funding and improving state-run schools is one important aspect, or way of fulfilling, this mission. It is clearly not the only way, and a century of experience suggests that it is not always the most successful way of accomplishing this.

Score: -3

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)**AGarden** says...

2:21pm Wed 11 Sep 13

Thanks Salendine for asking for my opinion.

As an ex-parent who has persuaded a Steiner school to mediate with a third party over the notorious unchecked bullying, something which, according to prominent Steiner critics, has never been achieved before, I've understandably got a fair bit to say on the subject, too much for a comment sized chunk here. So I've answered your question as thoroughly as I can on my own blog, here: <http://is.gd/goodfit>.

The framing of me having issues is backwards, btw it's Andy who has issues with me/us, not the other way round, as my questions to him demonstrate. This framing of who has the issues is also extremely relevant to what I'm talking about in my post about Steiner.

In a nutshell on Stroud Steiner School though, for those who don't want to visit my own blog - I'm not convinced that democracy is being served in the slightest, although the cakes will probably be good.

Score: -3

[Quote »](#)[Report this post »](#)

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