



LISAL

LANCASTER INDEPENDENT SCHOOL
FOR ALTERNATIVE LEARNING

Parent Handbook 2026

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Welcome

Welcome to our school. We hope that your time as a parent at the school will be happy, fruitful and fulfilling. This handbook is intended to ease your entry into the life of the school by providing answers to the questions you may have as a new parent.

History of LISAL

Steiner Education in Lancaster began in 1990 when a group of committed parents worked together to develop Rainbow Toddlers for 0-3 year olds. Since then the project has grown, extending the education for children up to the age of 11 with the formation of Cherry Trees Kindergarten in 1994 for 3-6 year olds and LISAL in 1999 for 6-11 year olds. In 2002 the Kindergarten and Lower School moved to its current location in a 120 year old building, which was formerly a Lancaster Methodist Chapel. We now offer education from the academic year a child turns 6. In 2022 Appledore Montessori began renting the old Kindergarten space, offering Montessori nursery and reception to children aged 2 – 5. They also run regular toddler groups.

LISAL Vision

At LISAL children will discover the joy of learning and experience the richness of childhood in an unhurried, thorough and creative environment, laying foundations for a lifelong love of learning. We strive to develop free thinking, confident, socially responsible individuals who are able to embrace their community, sustain their livelihoods and to positively shape the world. Steiner Schools are run co-operatively; the staff and parents work together sharing responsibilities for the good of the children and the school.

We believe it is essential that children be given the opportunity to explore the notion of diversity and come to value and understand Britain as a multi-ethnic and remarkably diverse society. Providing a safe learning environment in which children can raise sensitive issues and concerns without fear of reprimand or ridicule, and explore boundaries of what is acceptable, will foster an open attitude to diversity.

To realise this vision we draw upon the innovative approach and world-wide experience of Steiner Waldorf education. The School is registered with Waldorf UK (see their website for further information <https://waldorfeducation.uk/>).

For more information, please see the following policies: British Values, School Values

All policies are available on the school website: <https://lisal.school/policies-and-downloads/>

Introduction to Steiner Waldorf Education and Ethos

Steiner education is a holistic approach to learning developed by Rudolf Steiner, first implemented in 1919 at the original Waldorf School in Stuttgart, and now practiced in over 1,200 schools and kindergartens worldwide. It emphasizes creativity, rhythm, and activity through arts, movement, practical skills, and immersive “main lesson” blocks that allow for depth and focus. Teaching is age-appropriate and child-centred, fostering social, emotional, and intellectual development while encouraging inclusion, individuality, and non-competitive learning. Strong value is placed on storytelling, spoken language, and experiential learning, alongside ongoing formative assessment rather than standardised measurement. As a result, Steiner students are known for their independence, creativity, adaptability, and strong contributions to further education, work, and society.

Safeguarding

LISAL is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its pupils, we endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where all children are respected and valued. We are alert to signs of abuse and neglect; we follow the procedures outlined in our policy.

Parents are kept informed through regular updates on the notice board and in the newsletter, please feel you can approach our DSL at any time.

Designated Safeguarding Leads

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Katie Flasby, she is responsible for overseeing any concerns you may have about any children within the school or any member of staff. The Deputy Safeguarding Leads are Ola Mustapha and Elspeth Mukerji. We also have a Trustee responsible for Safeguarding who is Zoe Wild. You can arrange to meet with Katie any time during the school day at a time convenient to both of you if you have any concerns.

Online Safety

We recognise that the use of technologies and social media present particular challenges and risks to pupils both inside and outside of school. Children and young people may expose themselves to danger, whether knowingly or unknowingly, when using the internet and other technologies. Additionally, some young people may find themselves involved in activities which are inappropriate or possibly illegal.

Our pupils are not using technologies or the internet in school time, however we deliver Online Safety across the school as an integrated part of our curriculum to enable all pupils to learn about and manage the associated risks effectively. We also support parents and the school community (including all members of staff) to become aware and alert to the needs of keeping children safe online, for example through informative parents meetings.

Prevent

Our school also recognises its legal duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 known as The Prevent Duty whereby in the exercise of their functions, we need “to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”.

Mobile phones

The use of phones is not permitted during school hours and all phones must be handed in at the school office (Acceptable Use Policy). For festivals and performances, parents are permitted to carry their phones provided they are on silent. At the SLT’s discretion, parents may take photos or videos but must focus on their own child. These images or videos must not be shared on social media or outside close family or friends. Children who walk to and from school alone can have a phone, however it must be handed to the teacher and stored in the office. They are not permitted access during the school day.

Bridge Class

The Bridge Class is designed for children aged 5 to 6 and supports this crucial transition between home and school. At this sensitive stage, children learn through joy, play, and discovery, thriving best in harmonious and beautiful environments that encourage imitation and emotional security. A key measure of success is the richness and imagination of the children's play, where simple natural objects are transformed into many imaginative possibilities. This carefully nurtured imagination is protected from over-stimulation and premature formal learning, forming a strong foundation for later intellectual growth and creative, flexible thinking.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Handwork projects	Baking bread	Soup making	Outdoor Day	Wax Modelling

On Wednesday, the children make soup and eat it with the bread they made the day before. Please send a vegetable to school with your child. Thursday is outdoor day, so they will be out all day, regardless of the weather, so it's especially important that they have warm, waterproof clothes, plenty of food, and a change of clothes in school.

When children first start, they may need to bring a favourite teddy or doll to help make the transition. Apart from this we ask you to leave toys at home. We also ask you to leave jewellery at home.

Lower School

Each morning, children take part in a two-hour Main Lesson taught in focused blocks of one subject over three to five weeks, allowing for deep immersion and progressive learning. Lessons balance academic, artistic, and practical activities, beginning with singing, movement, and rhythmic work, and incorporating oral recall, literacy, and numeracy. Crafts and practical work are integrated throughout the curriculum, supporting cognitive development, perseverance, and meaningful learning connections. Alongside academic foundations, the curriculum fosters environmental awareness, cultural understanding, and social responsibility through stories, nature-based learning, and seasonal rhythms. Education is approached as an art that inspires imagination and a love of learning, preparing pupils with strong skills and confidence to transfer to secondary education at age 11.

The Steiner Lower School Curriculum is based on Rudolf Steiner's understanding of child development, with subjects structured to match pupils' developmental stages. In mixed-age classes, year plans combine curricula across the year, often progressing from the lower year's content to the higher year's by year end. Alongside the daily Main Lesson, pupils study specialist subjects such as music, languages, art, handwork, and crafts, which are closely integrated with Main Lesson themes. Foreign languages are taught primarily through spoken, rhythmic, and movement-based activities, emphasising imitation, cultural awareness, and oral fluency in the early years, with reading and writing introduced later. Learning is assessed through careful teacher observation, and full curriculum details are available in the school's policy documents.

Morning Circle

The first part of the morning is dedicated to coming together as a class: lighting a candle, greeting each other, reciting a verse and sharing what we are thankful for. We then move on to the rhythmic portion of the main lesson, which lasts between 20 and 40 minutes depending on the age of the children. This involves all

sorts of different activities designed to help the children settle into their bodies and wake up ready for learning. These activities could include: singing, skipping, reciting rhymes and poems, clapping games, passing bean bags, practicing the recorder (from class 1), literacy and numeracy games, and many other activities depending on the age of the children and the block they are studying.

School Trips

Every year the Lower School pupils attend the Christmas play at the Dukes Theatre and during the Summer Term they go on an end of year school trip. These will increase in length to include staying away from home for one and more nights as the children get older. In Class 5 the children attend the Steiner Olympics, this is usually held at Michael Hall School in East Sussex and involves staying away for 3 nights camping. We also have strong links with Middlewood Trust, where the original school was established and we visit there during the school year for outdoor education sessions.

Rhythms and Routines

Drop off and pick up

The school garden gate opens at 8:45am, and is monitored by a member of staff. Children have up to 10 minutes to play in the garden before heading into school to start the day.

At the end of the day, parents should wait in the front playground for class teachers to release children; alternative collectors must be approved by the School Office and know the child's password. Children in class 4 and 5 can walk alone by prior arrangement.

If a child is collected more than 15 minutes after the end of the booked session, a charge of £6 per hour late will be charged.

School Hours

	Bridge Class	Classes 1 - 2	Classes 3 - 5
Monday	8.55am – 1.00pm	8.55am – 1.00pm	8.55am – 3.15pm
Tuesday	8.55am – 1.00pm	8.55am – 3.15pm	8.55am – 3.15pm
Wednesday	8.55am – 1.00pm	8.55am – 3.15pm	8.55am – 3.15pm
Thursday	8.55am – 1.00pm	8.55am – 3.15pm	8.55am – 3.15pm
Friday	8.55am – 1.00pm	8.55am – 1.00pm	8.55am – 1.00pm

Children need the following in school everyday:

- A healthy packed lunch each day for snack and lunchtime; sweets and chocolate bars should not be included.
- A water bottle
- Comfortable, durable clothes suitable for active and muddy outdoor play, without cartoon characters or slogans.
- Safe, grippy slippers (such as pumps) and suitable outdoor footwear for all weather.
- Hats for summer and winter, wellingtons, waterproof coats and trousers, layered clothing, and covered arms for sun protection
- A full change of clothes should be kept at school in a named bag.

All items should be clearly labelled with their name.

Children should have their hair tied back, and are not permitted to wear make up or dangly jewelry (studs only). Children are **not** permitted to bring toys from home.

How you can support your child at home

- Practise putting belongings away neatly at home (shoes, coats, bags, waterproofs) to support independence at school.
- Ensure good sleep routines and avoid screens before school; limiting screen time supports imaginative play and creativity.

- Weekly homework begins in Class 4, linked to Main Lesson, English, or Maths; homework is issued on Wednesdays and due back on Mondays, with pupils responsible for returning their homework book. Encourage your child to establish a routine for completing homework in a timely manner.
- Enjoy books regularly with your child. For children who are reading, listen to them read every evening and record any comments in their reading log.

Communication

Parents are encouraged to address any concerns early with the class teacher and to make an appointment to discuss them. For matters other than teaching and learning (including SEND, classroom issues, or general school matters), parents should speak with the school manager. Parents are asked to check emails regularly for important information. The school holds two parents' evenings and two parents' assemblies each year, and an end-of-year report is provided. Additional meetings can be arranged by appointment as needed.

Attendance

Once children reach statutory school age of 5 years, legal requirements govern their school attendance. Holidays should be taken outside of term time, except in exceptional circumstances. See our attendance policy for more details.

Illness

In accordance with Health and Safety regulations, please ensure that 48 hours has elapsed following an episode of diarrhoea and / or vomiting, before your child returns to school to help stop contagious illnesses spreading. If children are ill in school and the teacher feels they need to go home, then parents/guardians will be contacted and must arrange for someone to collect them promptly. Please ring the school office to report any absence.

Parking

In order to be considerate to our immediate neighbours, please avoid parking on the water meters in the pavements in the side streets opposite school. Parking or driving over them causes damage to the meters, which in turn floods their houses. There is an area where you can park your car behind the Windmill Chip shop which has plenty of space. You can access this via Marsh Street, then turn right into Windmill Street to access it. Please also minimise noise when leaving during any evening events held at school.

Parent contribution to the school community

Sending your child to LISAL signals real choice and commitment. Your involvement as a parent will be a crucial factor in the success of your child's education. We expect all members of our community to contribute to the wider life of the school. As a very small school, we rely on everyone sharing their skills, expertise and time.

We expect all families to attend at least 3 out of the 6 maintenance days per year. If you do not attend, you will be charged as per page 3 of our fee policy, which is available on the website.

Our Summer and Winter fairs are always eagerly anticipated and are a fantastic way to bring the community together - the money raised is crucial to the schools finances, so all families are required to help with the set up and take down, as well as take on a role on the day.

While the Senior Leadership Team manages the day to day operations of the school, including finances, teaching and learning, admissions and HR, the Trustees play a vital role. Most of our trustees are also parents, and we expect every family to take on a role for 3 years during their time at the school, or find a volunteer who can support the school.

There are plenty of other opportunities to get involved: volunteering for weekly activities such as nature walks, helping at the school allotment, supporting during handwork lessons or hearing readers; less regular activities such as the craft group, accompanying the classes on trips and visits, updating social media and advertising for the school. Please note that roles which involve contact with the children will require safeguarding training and a DBS check.

Easy fundraising site

The school is a member of Easy fundraising, this is a fundraising site which raises money through large companies as you spend and doesn't cost you a penny! Just follow the link below to join. Easy Fundraising, if you make any purchases from websites registered with Easy Fundraising, you will be notified that you are helping to raise money for our school.

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/lancastersteiner/>

Appendix 1 - School Structure and Organisation

The School Governance Team

The School Governance Team (SGT) is made up of the Trustees, the Head Teacher and the School Manager. As the school is a Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee, the Trustees have responsibility for the legal, financial and employment areas of the School. Any Trustee can be nominated and elected at the AGM by the members of the company. All parents can be members (the Company can be joined by filling in a simple form available from the office).

The SLT meet monthly and the Trustees meet termly.

The Agenda and Minutes of these meetings are available from the School Office. If you would like something raised at an SGT meeting please send an email to: trustees@lisal.school

The School Governance Team is as follows:

Chair	Calum MacLure
Treasurer	Gabi Cani
Secretary	David Barton
Safeguarding	Zoe Wild
Leadership, Curriculum and Standards	TBC
Monitoring of Quality of Teaching	TBC
Strategy and Business Planning	Gabi Cani
Human Resources	Hugh Tuffen
Complaints	Gabi Cani
Health and Safety	Dave Barton
Inclusion & Diversity	Hannah MacLure
Parent Liaison	Hollie Blades
Education Coordinator	Katie Flasby
School Manager	Ola Mustapha

The Management Team

LISAL is a charitable company limited by guarantee. It is governed by the Board of Trustees. The Trustees work closely with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to enable delivery of a high quality education to the pupils of our school in a manner that meets the Independent School Standards and other relevant legislation and is aligned to the pedagogical approach of Steiner Waldorf education.

Staff

Katie Flasby - Katie is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Education Coordinator. She is a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and teaches Hazel class (Bridge to class 5). She manages the school and is responsible for teaching, learning and welfare of staff and pupils. She is contactable on katie@lisal.school

Elsbeth Mukerji - Elspeth is a Deputy DSL and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator (SENDCo). She works with staff, pupils, parents and when necessary external agencies/specialists to ensure that pupils receive the right support to remove barriers to learning and help them succeed. She works with staff to produce paperwork which records support strategies and keeps track of progress. She is a member of the SLT and teaches literacy practice sessions. She is contactable on elsbeth@lisal.school More information about children with SEND and how we support them is available in our SEND and Inclusion policy.

Ola Mustapha - Ola is also a Deputy DSL, the school manager and bursar. She holds responsibility for the financial, HR and administrative management of the school and works closely with the Treasurer and Chair of Trustees. She is also a member of the SLT. She is contactable on ola@lisal.school

Louise Duirwyn is a sessional teacher who teaches form drawing and painting.

Bregje Pinkse is a sessional teacher who teaches baking and handwork

Deborah Parker is a teaching assistant who works with Hazel class.

Rebecca Willmott is our office assistant and first point of contact for prospective families. Her office hours are 8:45am-11:45am, Monday to Friday. The office email address is enquiries@lisal.school

Samson Duff is our fabulous caretaker and organiser of maintenance days. He looks after the school building, including health and safety.

Marta Gawron is our lovely cleaner who keeps our school spick and span.

The College of Teachers

The College of Teachers is made up of all class teachers (though sessional teachers may be invited to join them for College of Pedagogical meetings).

Appendix 2 – Further Information and Recommended Reading

Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship www.steinerwaldorf.org/

Ofsted Report www.ofsted.gov.uk

Recommended Reading

Many of these books are available from our School Library, please ask the school office to join. Books on Steiner Waldorf Education

Understanding Waldorf Education Jack Petrash

Waldorf Education C Clouder & M Rawson

Free to Learn Lynne Oldfield

Waldorf Education in Theory and Practice R Blunt

School as a Journey Torin Finser

Educating Through Art: The Steiner Agnes Noble

School Approach

Books on Early Childhood

You are your Child's First Teacher Rahima Baldwin

Ready to Learn – From Birth

To School Readiness M Rawson & M Rose

Work and Play in Early Childhood Freya Jaffke

The Incarnating Child J Salter

The First Three Years of the Child K Konig

Genius of Play Sally Jenkinson

Appendix 3 - School Festivals

The celebration of festivals throughout the year is important to mark the seasonal changes and the rhythms of the earth outwardly and inwardly. This creates a further supportive rhythm in the lives of the children as they move up the school. Each festival has its own distinctive mood and parents are encouraged to join with the teachers and children in building a tradition of marking the festivals. The Lower School children learn about festivals celebrated in other cultures throughout the year and connections can be made between cultures and their traditions. On these occasions the parents, children, staff and friends of the school community come together and celebrate. The festivals include the sharing of children's poems, drama and songs, and shared meals. The Lower School also hold half termly assemblies for the sharing of pupils' work, to which all parents are invited. Detailed arrangements for each festival will be sent out to all families nearer the individual dates, some festivals are celebrated as a whole school community, some are conducted as part of the school day:

Michaelmas / Harvest Festival

Michaelmas is the first festival of the school year and marks the changing season to autumn. It is a festival of courage and giving thanks for the harvest and looking forward to the year ahead with courage, perseverance and strength. The Lower School usually performs a play about St Michael for the school community.

Lantern Festival

This festival falls at the time of Martinmas and near the time of the Hindu festival of Diwali. It is a festival celebrating the divine spark within us as the cloak of winter darkens around us. As the evenings draw in, all the children, from the toddlers to the Lower School, make lanterns. The whole school community then comes together one evening to go on a lantern walk around the local area. As darkness falls, the children guide us with their lights, and sing songs along the way, making this an exciting event for all. Following the short walk we return to the school for some warming homemade soup and bread and watch the Lower School present the story of Saint Martin who, in an act of caring and generosity, cut his cloak in half to share with a stranger one winter's night.

Advent Spiral

For some the Advent Spiral is a time to remember the Christmas story, for others it is a festival of transition from one season to the next. By creating a relationship to nature in this time of outer darkness and inner light, we move towards the true preparation for Christmas, and away from outer materialism. The Advent Spiral has become a popular tradition and is one of the festive highlights of the year. It traditionally takes place during the late afternoon on the last Sunday of November or first Sunday of December either here at school or at a venue in the centre of the town. As we sing a selection of simple seasonal songs, a spiral of evergreens and candles is created by each member of the school community, resulting in a beautiful image to leave with and reflect upon.

Candlemas / Snowdrop Festival

The teachers and children come together in school to mark both the Christian celebration of Candlemas which marks the day when Mary presented Jesus at a temple 40 days after his birth and the Celtic festival of Imbolc which celebrates the goddess Brigid and the coming of the spring, as symbolised by the snowdrops emerging out of the cold earth. We celebrate the returning of the light by singing spring songs and creating a beautiful display of flowers and candles.

Easter Egg Hunt

Easter, as a celebration of renewal, marks the festivities of spring, which we celebrate by hand painting eggs for an egg hunt in our school garden.

May Day

Traditionally celebrated with maypole dancing, this is a beautiful festival. The children spend the weeks beforehand practising their dances and songs. On the day the whole school community is invited to watch the children, dressed in their finest with garlands of flowers perform their routines around the may pole and rejoice at the coming of the summer.

Midsummer

The Midsummer Festival marks the end of the school year and the beginning of the summer. At this festival we give thanks for the bounty of summer and the strength it gives us to face challenges with song, dance and the exciting opportunity for the Lower School children to leap over the specially constructed St John's fire. The leaping of the fire is a midsummer tradition in many countries which is seen as a symbolic statement of Will – the will to get new endeavours off to a good start and to rid ourselves of doubt and weaknesses. Each year when we build the fire together, the Lower School children place wishes for their achievements in the year ahead within the kindling made by the Kindergarten children. This festival, held in the school garden, usually ends with a family picnic.