

# GERMAN CURRICULUM

for German as a Foreign Language

for Class 1 to Class 8



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## ***Introduction***

One of the main aims of learning any foreign language is to generate a positive attitude towards other cultures-Through other languages you see the world in a different way. They offer another perspective on one's own culture and language by helping us to see the world in a more differentiated way.

Waldorf education treats language itself as a being in its own right, as something universal and essentially human. Each language represents an expression of universal human language, filtered, as it were, through the various folk souls. Each foreign language learned gives one another point of access to what is universally human.

Learning foreign languages extends one's understanding of the world and at the same time gives a greater range of possibilities for individual expression. Working intensively with language harmonises and extends our affective responses to the world around us. Not only do we become more articulate, we also have more to say.

Modern research has shown that the learning of other languages follows an analogous process, to the learning of the native tongue. Once the child has found an orientation in the language of its parents through imitation of role models and healthy encouragement, the second and subsequent languages can be acquired in a similar manner. While children are still young, their speech organs are still in an unformed and plastic state.

Experience has shown that after the age of around 12 it is rare that the unique and characteristic sounds of the foreign language can be articulated with accuracy. Good pronunciation, a sense for the cadence and melody of a language can only really be gained while the speech organs of the child are still malleable. For this reason, Steiner Waldorf Education begins the teaching of usually two foreign languages from the age of 6 years onwards. Much recent research has confirmed the strong link between movement, gesture, speech itself and mobility of thought. Steiner Waldorf teaching methods take account of these facts in conscious use of movement and gesture.

## **Classes 1-3 (Age 6-9)**

### **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of foreign language teaching in these classes is to build up an extensive oral vocabulary and to awaken the children to the characteristic sounds, intonations and rhythms of the languages. The development of good listening skills is particularly important at this age. The children are also introduced to many aspects of the foreign cultures through traditional folklore and customs, poetry, music and even food.

The extensive linguistic material learnt orally in Classes 1-3 forms the basis for the subsequent introduction of reading and writing, and a systematic understanding of grammatical usage from Class 4 (age 10) onwards.

### **Method**

In the first three classes the language teacher works strongly with the element of imitation. The children are taught essentially orally and no reading or written work is undertaken. This does not preclude the use of drawing and in particular picture dictations to reinforce comprehension and self-expression. Gesture accompanying speech is an important element, as are play-acting, games and many practical activities.

Rhythmically structured language plays an important role in foreign language teaching at this level, because it naturally strengthens the child's memory. For this reason, songs, poems, sayings, counting rhymes, categories such as days of the week, parts of the body, everyday activities are learned by heart. At this age, learning is a very much a group activity. Repetition and revision of what has already been learnt is done within the group context. In games and situational activities, however, individual children have ample opportunity to speak in the foreign language on their own.

Comprehension of the content remains in the artistic realm of feeling and is linked to specific contexts such as a seasonal poem, or a game. Wherever possible, vocabulary should be learned in meaningful sentences with variations of, for example, time, place or person. Question and answer formulas are learned as whole entities. Much simple everyday vocabulary is self-explanatory. It is not necessary at this stage to translate vocabulary as long as the children feel secure within the wider context of the theme. With the exception of some classroom instructions, the teacher stays within the foreign language throughout the lesson.

Just as the native language is best learned through strong identification with personalities important to the child, such as parents, siblings etc., so too the learning of a foreign language requires a strong association with the personality of the teacher. For the young child, the teacher represents both the language and the culture. Where the teacher is not a native speaker, special attention must be paid to establishing this identification.

## **Class 1**

### **Lesson Content**

- narrative songs (e.g. Dornröschen/Hänschen klein)
- verses and songs involving actions (e.g. Zeigt her eure Füße)
- finger games
- acting upon simple commands
- counting (Cardinal numbers)
- parts of the body
- daily activities (eating, washing, dressing)
- colours
- prepositions
- simple conversations (e. g. Wie heißt du? – Ich heiße ...  
Wo wohnst du? - Ich wohne in...)
- games repeating individual structures or items of vocabulary  
(e.g. Hast du ...? / Ist es ...? )

### **Attainment Targets**

By the end of Class 1, the children's active vocabulary should include:

- the main colours
- the main items in the classroom
- parts of the body
- days of the week and seasons
- numbers up to 20

They should also be able to respond simple commands and basic questions.

## **Class 2**

### **Lesson Content**

activities from Class 1 to be continued and enlarged upon  
(e.g. poems/ folk songs/ items in the classroom/ commands etc.)

recitation of cardinal and ordinal numbers

months

nature (mountain, river, tree, flower, moon etc.)

articles of clothing (e.g. Hampelmann-Lied)

daily routine activities (e.g. Ich ziehe mich an / wasche mich)

listening to simple stories

acting out of stories etc.

talking about themselves:

- birthday
- age
- family (e.g. Ich habe einen Bruder etc. )

The forms of 'sein' and 'haben' in sentence form (e.g. Ich bin der König, Du bist die Königin, er ist der Prinz. etc. ).

## Targets

By the end of Class 2, most children should

- know the months
- know a range of natural features (mountain etc)
- know cardinal numbers up to 100, ordinal numbers up to 10
- respond to simple questions about themselves, e.g.:  
Wie alt bist du?  
Wann hast du Geburtstag?  
Wo wohnst du?  
Hast du einen Bruder / eine Schwester?  
Wie heißt dein Bruder/deine Schwester/deine Mutter/dein Vater?
- apply simple structures (e. g. Ist es ...? / Hast du ...? / Ich möchte ...)
- follow a simple story
- point out/name different items in their environment

## **Class 3**

### **Lesson Content**

conversational work to be continued

numbers

colours

places (town, village, city, country)

forms of transport

clothes

time (clock)

more complex commands

items of food

sayings and simple stories

acting out and learning individual parts of a dramatised story

picture dictations

Verb forms and tenses in sentence structures (e.g. Der Bauer mäht das Korn,  
die Maurer bauen ein Haus. du backst uns Brot, )

verses practising grammatical forms (e.g. tenses)

main prepositions

### **Targets**

More consciousness should be brought to the use of the language.

Children should

- be familiar with basic items of food, clothing, furniture,
- forms of transport, places and directions
- be familiar with times of the day (morning, evening etc.)
- clock time (hours, quarter hours, minutes)
- be aware of the different genders
- take a more active part orally (e.g. supply the next step of a story which the teacher is re-telling)
- apply structures practiced more freely
- recognise the most common question words
- use the main spacial prepositions
- recognise the main personal pronoun? (ich, du , er ...)
- recognise possessive adjectives (mein, dein ...)

## **Class 4**

### **Aims and Objectives**

At around the age of ten children gain a new level of self-consciousness. They need to individualise much that had been collectively learned. Writing is introduced as a conscious and more individual noting down of what has been accumulated in the collective memory.

Using material learned by heart in the first three classes, writing in the foreign language is introduced. The children learn to recognise vocabulary they already know. Before printed reading material is introduced, they read what they have written.

In Class 4 elementary sentence structure is learned, nouns and simple verb forms are practiced. Example sentences are drawn from the familiar range of classroom dialogue.

Singing and recitation, simple dialogue and word games continue to be a basic part of the lessons.

### **Method**

While imitation and repetition continue to play an important role, the children should begin to recognise characteristic spelling forms, inflections (word endings, plural forms etc.).

In Class 4, children are usually introduced to exercise book work based closely on the forms used for Main Lesson work. These handwritten books form the equivalent of a text book. Initially one main lesson book should suffice for simple writing exercises. Later it is useful to have a book for poems and songs, a book for vocabulary and grammar.

Vocabulary lists can consist of word families (key words relevant to a particular theme such as parts of the body, the classroom, seasons, colours, simple commands and question forms). These lists need only be in the foreign language and they can be illustrated where appropriate. It is not necessary at this stage for the pupils to write word for word translations. Wherever possible, nouns should be learned in sentences with appropriate verb forms and simple adjectives. After writing whole sentences, it may be useful to underline nouns or verbs with a distinctive colour. The writing of such vocabulary is the end of a long process of oral learning.

One effective way of practising vocabulary is to summarise simple stories using familiar words. The children may copy down two or three sentences giving the basic outline of the story. The text should include as much repetition as possible.

Other than copying such material from the blackboard, written exercises can include simple dictations (two sentences can be learned by heart and written down). The children should initially have access to the original text when writing a dictation, only when vocabulary has been thoroughly learned, is it appropriate to require 'blind' dictations.

Situational games, little plays, guessing games and so on still form an important part of the lesson.

## Lesson Content

writing down and reading of verses, poems, songs etc learned in previous years  
alphabet  
spelling and short dictations  
first introduction of grammar:  
learn present tense forms of common verbs with personal pronouns (other tenses can be read in context of texts)  
parts of speech; nouns with article, plural and associated common adjectives  
prepositions in, an, aus, auf, über, unter, vor, hinter, zwischen  
simple sentence structures (subject and object)  
use of singular and plural nouns with singular and plural verb endings  
(Das Kind singt ein Lied. Die Kinder singen schöne Lieder.  
Use of question words  
describing animals, the weather, household items etc.

## Targets

- By the end of the year the children should
- know the German alphabet
  - be able to spell out their name and some common words
  - read practiced words and sentences accurately
  - be able to give simple descriptions
  - recognise nouns, verbs and adjectives
  - know the verb forms in the present tense
  - know the gender of some common nouns
  - know the plural forms of some common nouns
  - be able to construct, simple sentences of their own

## **Class 5**

### **Aims and Objectives**

At this age (age 11) the children should have a strongly rhythmical memory. They enjoy reciting quite long poems and one can sing complex rounds. Building on the simple structures learned in Class 4, the children strengthen their grasp of grammar. Vocabulary should now be consciously learned and practiced. A first reader can be introduced.

### **Method**

Speech exercises, questions and answer dialogue and many varied poems all recited by heart (and learned by repetition) are essential ways of cultivating good clear pronunciation and sentence melody, as well as reinforcing idiomatic vocabulary. The content of such poems (seasonal, narrative etc.) need not be explained in detail; imaginative though simplified introductions can suffice.

With increasing diversity of vocabulary, children should be encouraged to use the words they know imaginatively. To awaken an interest in the words themselves, the children should hear and read vivid and characteristic descriptions of people, places and situations.

Vocabulary arising out of the reader is introduced before the new part of the text. Other topical themes will also have to be introduced as the need arises. Simple comprehension questions to the reading text or to other topics should be practiced first orally with the whole class, then individuals are called upon. Only then should the questions be put in written form. Such questions and their variations can form the content for homework exercises, dictations etc.

Once new grammatical structures have been introduced, practiced and understood, a simple statement of the essential rules should be written (ideally in the pupils own formulations) in English in a book specially kept for the purpose. These rules are best kept separate from whatever other exercise books are used. A grammar book can be started in Class 5 and used through to Class 8.

Plays, as ever, are the best way of engaging a class' interest.

## **Lesson Content**

Songs/Poetry

Plays

Stories

Practice reading

Answering simple questions on a story both in speaking and writing

Strong verbs

work with verb tenses

Cases (Accusative/Dative)

Prepositions

basic adverbs and adverbials of time, manner, place

Sentence structure (e.g. with modal verbs/subordinate clauses)

vocabulary tests

dictation

## **Targets**

By the end of the year the children should

- be able to respond to simple questions to a text
- be able to retell small portions of a story freely
- be able to use and identify present, past and future tense of the verbs learned
- be aware of the different sentence structure in English and German
- know the position of the adverbs

## **Class 6**

### **Aims and Objectives**

Class 6 marks the threshold to puberty. The young person's intellectual faculties need to be awakened to the conceptual structures of language. They need to learn how to learn vocabulary in a more conscious way.

### **Method**

At this age the pupils can usefully learn conjugation of verbs, declension of nouns, adjectives, the use of terms such as nominative, dative etc. . In other words, order is important in Class 6!

Dramatic, heroic poetry and much humour are the essential ingredients in speech.

The geography and characteristic episodes, historical and mythical personalities from history form a main theme in Classes 6, 7 and 8.

Once a reasonable basis of grammar and vocabulary has been achieved, the pupils can be encouraged to express themselves more freely in German. Letters, simple descriptions, diaries, summaries of stories can form the material for written exercises.

At this age the teacher must reckon with considerable differences of ability within one class. Exercises should be differentiated to suit the range of learning needs. This does not necessitate dividing up a class.

Children entering the school at this stage with no previous knowledge of the language should be taught separately until it is realistic for them to join the class.

### **Lesson Content**

Songs/poetry - possibly of a military (*i.e. strongly rhythmical D.v.W.*) nature -

Reading of stories

Question/Answers both of a conversational nature and on stories

Introduction of a grammar book

Revision of grammar covered so far

Passive/Active

### **Targets**

By the end of the year, children should

- be able to speak more freely about themselves and their environment
- be able to speak more freely on what they have read in class
- recognise and give examples (e.g. from a text) for the areas of grammar covered so far
- understand the grammatical terminology involved

## **Class 7/8**

### **Method**

The method for Classes 7 and 8 follows closely on that described for Class 6. There is a strong emphasis on cultural, geographical, historical and topical themes. These may form the subject of reading literature and in Class 8 individual work projects (e.g. biographies etc.). Idiomatic and colloquial language is also important and regular space should be given in the lessons for practising conversation. Class exchanges and penfriends should be encouraged.

The pupils should be introduced to two-language dictionaries and should begin to do simple translations.

### **Lesson Content**

Biographies (related to Main Lesson programme: Scientists, explorers etc.), historical and cultural topics, modern life etc., extracts from literary works

Direct and indirect speech

Revision of all cases

Gerund

Prepositions (in das / in dem )

simple subordinate sentence structure

comparison of adjectives and adverbs

relative pronouns

### **Targets**

By the end of the year, the children should

- understand the use of the cases
- know which case accompanies which preposition
- be able to compose short pieces of writing of their own with reasonable accuracy
- have acquired a firmer grasp of sentence structure
- be able to express themselves clearly in simple sentences in a range of everyday situations (age, where they live, shopping, social exchange, asking their way etc.)