

HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is a reference for families of the Newcastle Waldorf School. Its aim is to expand on the Prospectus and give information and guidance to parents about what they can expect from the School and also what the School expects of them.

When you sign the enrolment form you are signing to say that you have read, understood and have access to a copy of this handbook. A condition of initial and ongoing enrolment is support for the ethos of the School, which this handbook helps to clarify. Further clarification and any changes are distributed by notes, emails and letters home. Parents can also seek clarification at any time from teachers.

AT SCHOOL

Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy and Numeracy education begins in year one when the child is about seven years old. The children are taught letters and numbers in a living, tangible and pictorial way. The method of teaching works on the whole child and the results live within the child's being for life.

Music

Music is an integral part of the School day from Kindergarten right through high school. As with other subjects the practical comes before the theory. The children learn to sing, play and clap before they learn to read music. They learn to play recorder and lyre by ear under the guidance of the Class Teacher in primary school.

In year 5 students start to receive individual lessons on an instrument chosen by the Class Teacher in consultation with parents. These lessons are taught weekly at school and they prepare the student for group ensembles and orchestras as well as giving them something to pursue individually for the next 6 or more years. Each student is expected to practise their instrument at home on a regular basis so that they are able to improve from lesson to lesson and bring something new to the group at each rehearsal.

The teaching of theory and music notation only starts when the child has mastered the elementary techniques of their instrument. All students have their

music lesson with a music teacher engaged by the School. If parents wish for their child to learn an instrument by another method, they should discuss this with the School to minimise conflicts in methodologies.

The main purpose of music in the School is enjoyment and nourishment. In order to avoid premature self-consciousness and the possible associated emotional stress and nervousness, the School keeps all performance of music and drama 'in house', at least until years 11 and 12. Music performances in the School are only used as a way of sharing with the other students. The School discourages competitiveness in music and other subjects.

Eurythmy

Eurythmy is a dance-like artform which involves the expression of sound through movement. Specific movements correspond to particular notes, intervals, consonants or vowel sounds. At a surface level eurythmy enhances coordination, strengthens the ability to listen and assists with the development of language and music, but at a much deeper level students develop an awareness of social dynamics. Eurythmy draws the students into conscious movement, which enables them to awaken within their bodies, from their fingertips to their toes. This leads to an unfolding of a sense of self which may lead to a knowledge of themselves and a respect for the space around them. Eurythmy is practised from kindergarten to high school.

Camps and Excursions

Day excursions are part of the cycle of events at the School and are viewed as an essential part of every child's education. Excursions usually involve walking in and exploring the National Parks, State Forests and coastal areas within an hour's drive of the School. There are also more specific excursions to places relevant to each subject such as wetlands or historically significant sites. Parents are notified in writing of all excursions prior to the day, but signing the enrolment contract includes granting permission for students to attend all excursions.

Excursions usually require students to wear clothing and footwear that is sturdy and suitable for outdoor activities. This includes sun protection appropriate to the season and conditions. Students also need backpacks to carry their lunch and water.

Parents receive notes about overnight and multi-night camps and special excursions well in advance and they are required to fill in a permission slip and make a contribution to the cost of the trip. The focus of overnight camps is working together as a community in all aspects of the activity. Notes home will specify items that students need to bring, and not bring, to enhance this sense of community.

Other Physical Activity

Whilst there are many opportunities at school to participate in all types of physical activity, the emphasis is not on competition. Many of the games that are played involve teams competing against each other but there is no formal competition or comparison beyond what happens in the game itself. We value strength, skill, technique and, above all, enjoyment in these activities, for ourselves and for others.

Grading and Reporting

Primary

All primary assessment is conducted discreetly and is integrated in the learning activities. Teachers avoid competition and comparison between students by not giving marks. Feedback is given individually so that each student's focus is on doing their best for the teacher, themselves and out of respect and interest in the subject and a joy of learning.

Secondary

In high school, assessment activities are often more explicit. While they are often integral to the learning activities, students become increasingly aware of the teacher's expectations in assessment tasks. If students receive marks it is primarily to highlight areas of strength and those that need improvement. Teachers generally prefer to give verbal and written feedback to promote learning rather than competition.

Generally

Class and subject teachers keep assessment data for each student. This data is compiled in half-yearly and yearly reports that are made available to parents by way of an interview with the Class Teacher. Parents should organise to talk with their child's Class Teacher or Class Guardian at least twice each year to discuss their child's report and progress. Copies of reports are available on request.

Dress Code

- While Newcastle Waldorf School does not have a uniform, the students are encouraged to wear clothes that are appropriate for the full range of school activities. The School provides an environment where children have the possibility to develop individual personal qualities rather than conditioned stereotyped images of themselves. In high school, the students are encouraged to dress in a manner that sets an example to the younger children. Parents are required to oversee their child's clothing to ensure that there is adequate covering for the shoulders, chest, midriff and upper legs. Parents are responsible for providing suitable sun protection, particularly for excursions. Caps are not considered suitable as they don't protect the neck as well as a wide brimmed hat. Open shoes (but not thongs) or bare feet may be worn at a variety of times through the day, but all student must bring a pair of covered shoes each day. Teachers will contact parents if they feel that a student's dress is impacting negatively on their ability to learn within the school community.
- Covered shoulders, chests and midriffs.
- Adequate leg covering that allows running around.
- Covered shoes must be brought to school each day.
- No large brand names, slogans or offensive or distracting imagery.
- No makeup or nail polish and only one piece of jewellery that is safe in any given situation (High School only).
- Broad-brimmed hats (no caps).

Nourishment

Small children are, as it were, a total sense organ: a child's reaction to the world around them is made through their nervous system. The child learns through this means, and more intensively than an adult. It is important that the experiences we expose our young children to are of the most noble and beautiful nature. The colours that they see and absorb into their inner eye should ideally

be the pure colours of Nature as seen in the rainbow or the flower. The perfumes should be those continuously created in the nature world, from the salty sea spray through to the nectar of the honeysuckle and the zest of the lemon. Likewise with the sense of touch they should be allowed unconsciously to experience all the variety that Nature offers in the tactile world from the grain of sand to the clump of moss.

It is important that the child first experiences the natural tastes made freely available by Nature for as long as possible, both to enhance physical development, and to make a connection with its environment. The School is very conscious of providing an environment where this is possible and asks for parent support in packing healthy lunches for children made up of food that is not pre-packaged wherever possible.

Equipment

Students are not permitted to bring phones or other electronic devices to school. If there is a particular reason for carrying any of the above items, students are required to hand them in at the office before school. They can be collected at the end of the school day. Students are responsible for their personal belongings and the School accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage incurred to these belongings.

Attendance/Illness

The School encourages parents to consider the healthy benefits of rhythm within the school day, the week and the term. There is a direct correlation between healthy physicality, the organs and nervous systems and a life where rhythm holds sway. The School believes that it is important that the students experience the rhythm of the day, the unit of work, and the term; from the beginning through the build-up and continuation, and through to the conclusion. Rest is obviously advisable for serious illnesses, however, if a child is suffering tiredness, a light injury or mild illness the School prefers the weekly rhythm to remain uninterrupted. If parents feel unsure as to whether it is or is not appropriate to send a child to school they should consult with the Class Teacher or Guardian.

We encourage children to be at school up to half an hour before commencement of class in order to settle in and play with their friends. You are requested to pick up your children immediately after school. If you are delayed by more than 20

minutes, please inform the School by phone so that we can provide the appropriate care for you child.

To ensure that both the School and parents know where students are meant to be on any given school day please note the following:

- Phone the School office before 9am on any day that a student is not attending (unless prior arrangements have been made to inform the School). If, for some reason, the message service is not available on the office phone, please text/call the School EMERGENCY mobile 0491163961 before, and not after 9am.
- The rolls will be taken in the morning lesson and any student absence that has not been explained by this time will be noted as such in the roll. Teachers may then contact parents under the assumption that they are unaware of the student's non-attendance.

Parents must inform the School in writing of any new circumstances that will affect their child's participation in any aspect of their school life. This information must include a time frame for recommencing participation in all activities.

Medication

Please contact your child's Class Teacher or Guardian if your child requires, or may require, medication of any type while at school (this includes paracetamol or other over-the-counter medication as well as alternative medicines). It is important that the School is able to oversee the use of all medication by students, so the Class Teacher/Guardian will discuss with you:

- Having a written plan
- Storing the medication at school or in the student's bag
- Whether the student is able to self administer, and, if so how they:
 - are supervised while self-administering, or
 - notify the Class Teacher/Guardian when they have self administered, and
 - are made aware that they are not to share their medication with other students.

With regard to first aid emergencies: all staff are trained, and our policy is that:

- Any qualified staff member may administer first aid in accordance with their training.
- Parents will be consulted, where possible, if their child needs urgent attention, but the school reserves the right to take all necessary steps to provide first aid in an emergency situation in accordance with their training.

First aid guidelines recommend against giving any medication to students unless it is part of saving a life. Teachers will not give painkillers, for example, to students without parental permission. Staff are trained in administering asthma and anaphylaxis medication, and they will do so in a life threatening situation.

Working Bees

Numerous Working Bees are held throughout the year and we wholeheartedly welcome parents to participate and experience the joy of working alongside teachers and other parents who share in a common purpose. Projects large and small are tackled and the School appreciates contributions from those with or without expertise. The children gain an immense amount of comfort seeing their teachers and parents working harmoniously together - the value of which transcends all other tangible results achieved on the day.

Parents are reminded of their obligations at working bees under the Work Health and Safety Act, 2011 where each person and level of organisation involved in any job or undertaking has the responsibility to ensure that it is done safely and all reasonably foreseeable risks are minimised. Under this legislation, parents volunteering their time at working bees are classified as 'workers' and as such are responsible for their own safety and that of any children working or playing in the vicinity. Participants in Working Bees are required to present for induction at the first Working Bee they attend, or where they undertake new work.

Code of Conduct for Parents and Visitors

Parents and visitors to Newcastle Waldorf School shall:

- Behave responsibly and safely at all times

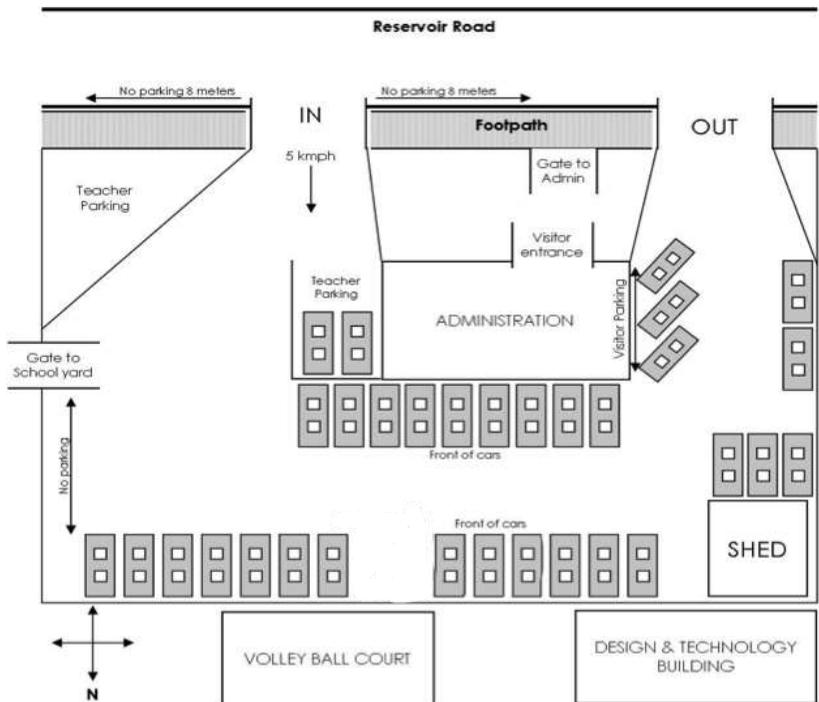
- Respect the needs and rights of other members of the School community
- Respect school property by not marking, removing or damaging it
- Refrain from entering the School yard and classrooms during school hours (Report to administration office during school hours if necessary)
- Refrain from using offensive language on or near school grounds
- Refrain from any form of harassment or haranguing directed at staff members, contractors, volunteers, other parents or children on school grounds and on the telephone
- Refrain from using violence or other aggressive behaviours when dealing with any member of staff or community
- Utilise correct protocols for grievances and suggestions and refrain from malicious gossip or any activity that may undermine the stability of the school community
- Respect teachers' and board members' rights to privacy in their personal lives.

If the Principal or the Board of Directors believes that a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation between a parent and the School has broken down to the extent that it adversely impacts on that relationship, then the School, the Principal or the Board may require the parent to remove the child from the School. No remission of fees will apply.

Work Health and Safety in the Car Park

To ensure the safety of children in the car park please note the following:

- Observe the 10 km/h “shared zone” speed limit in the car park (5 km/h is even better)
- Reverse parking in all car-spaces
- Park close enough to other cars so as to only occupy one car-space
- Do not leave your car running while parked
- Come to the gate to collect your children so that they are under your supervision when crossing the car park. A student running through the car park to their parents’ car can be dangerous.
- Minimise lingering outside the gate with your children. For impromptu talks with teachers or other parents, please come inside the gate (after 3:25) and make sure your children are also inside the gate.
- You are responsible for your children when you are on the School property after 3:25



AT HOME

Homework

Teachers do not give homework to students in Kindergarten or early primary, but students in the upper primary will occasionally be given some aspect of the day's work to complete at home. These are usually tasks such as finishing a drawing, learning a poem or a part for a play or making a diary entry or drawing of the weather at sunset.

In the high school homework increasingly becomes part of the rhythm of learning. Teachers give homework to consolidate that part of the day's learning which needs strengthening. The aim is to give the children something to work over before they go to sleep so that the unconscious mind has some nourishment to digest during the hours of physical rest.

To best support the education of the child, families should make sure that they set aside ample time every afternoon or evening to allow students to complete their homework without pressure. Students also need time to practise their individual musical instrument. Parents can help children to develop a truer connection with their work in this way, rather than that developed when work is rushed in the morning, on the bus or in school breaks. Producing the work just to have fulfilled the requirements is of little value both immediately and in the long term. Developing strong connections with work nourishes the growing human being.

Holidays

School holidays are set before the commencement of the new school year and there is always at least one week of holidays that does not coincide with the state-wide school holidays. The School decided to provide this week for families who like to avoid the high prices and busyness of the regular holidays. The School expects that families will utilise this week rather than take students out of school in the last week of term. The last day of term always has important concerts and special activities for all students.

When the Easter break falls in term time the School will not be running. We understand that this is another time when many families are able to take holidays together. School will be open on other public holidays that fall in term

time for those that can attend. We will usually organise a special activity for those who come on public holidays.

Electronics and the Imitative child

The effect of electronic devices, social media, television, computer games and mobile phones on the child's nervous system and the deprivation to their sensory organs that results is in direct conflict with Steiner's educational philosophy. The effects of electronic devices are often clearly observed in the kindergarten and primary school. The child may: speak in the tone of a certain character or machine; seem 'stuck' in creative play, unable to play anything but a particular game character; have difficulty engaging with a story or a concert; be unable to instinctively imitate the class teacher; and can't 'think' of anything to play, which can lead to chaotic and unconstructive play. While in the Upper Primary and High School, anxiety, sleep problems, image obsession, gaming addiction and cyber bullying can become consequent social issues.

We ask parents to provide an environment that allows the child to interact with the natural world, rather than the electronic one. Observe how instinctively the child will imitate nature and the adults close by. See how the child can be the wind and the cat, and want to polish the floor when the floor is being polished. It is important to encourage these aspects of imitation, which are beautiful, purposeful and worthwhile. Cultivate the pursuit of sensitivity and beauty in a child by smelling the flowers, gazing with wonder at the moon and stars, listening to bird calls, touching the moss, feeling the worn stones, tasting the sweet juices and saps of the fruit and flowers and balancing on the low edges. Your child not only imitates your outward actions but also your inner state of being. This imitative state is what the School strives to foster within the small child: by imitating actions that are worthwhile and are completed processes, the child will develop the ability to think properly and to follow through processes.

In the Upper Primary and High School parents need to carefully consider the impacts of social media use and the need for consistent monitoring. Negative effects such as anxiety and depression are growing issues for teenagers. Students need to be well aware of the permanent nature of various types of media use, and the need to always be positive and respectful to others in their social media posts. While the school covers cyber safety as a PDHPE topic, and through parent meetings for the Primary School, it is expected that parents will take all due responsibility to ensure the safety of their own child as well as the safety of those with whom their child is interacting.

The School's Expectation

Newcastle Waldorf School believes that it is important that the School and families uphold common values so that the child may flourish in consistent and protected environments. It is well known that the link between school and home is vital, and that heartfelt parent support and interest leads to a more interested and involved student. The School expects parents to consciously be appraising what their child is exposed to, thus embarking on a journey of discovery. Parenting is a creative process and, likewise, requires imagination and involves struggle. Of course there is an ideology underpinning what goes on in the School, but this is in no way a creed or rigid set of rules. Steiner himself prescribed nothing at all, but encouraged his readers to think for themselves in their own place and time.

While the school covers cyber safety as a High school PDHPE topic, and through parent meetings for the Primary School, it is very important that parents take all due responsibility to ensure the safety of their own child and also the well being of those with whom their child is interacting.

We ask parents to continue, day in and day out, to ponder, discuss, contemplate and examine the issues in relation to themselves and the world, and then act with growing conviction for the positive development of their child.

Fees

School fees are invoiced at the beginning of each term. School fees are due by the 2nd week of term. Fees can be paid by direct transfer into the School's account, cash or cheque. Please feel free to talk to the Principals or Bursar about payment methods.

COMMUNICATION

Notes

Children receive notes on a regular basis which advise families of upcoming events and dates. Please be sure to check your child's school bag daily. Some notes are also sent to parents by email, so it is important to keep your contact details up to date.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

Interviews are not only an important way for parents and teachers to get to know each other, but also to discuss their child's progress in all aspects of their education. Parents should make an interview with their child's Class Teacher at least twice a year to view, discuss and sign reports. The Class Teacher or parent may also request a meeting to discuss a specific problem or situation at any other time through the year. Teachers make every effort to be available for these meetings as they find them the best times to listen to parents and have in-depth conversations about the individual child.

Talks and Workshops

Class Talks

Class Talks are held regularly and are always relevant to a child's age. The talks refer to Steiner's philosophy regarding the needs of the developing child as well as things specific to the class itself. Parents should attend these talks as often as possible. There is always an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns. A member of the School Board of Directors is often at these meetings.

General Talks/Meetings

The College of Teachers or a request from the parents may instigate a General Talk. Past talks have included; gardening, the seasons, storytelling, more general Steiner philosophy, the senses and other topics.

Parent Workshops

Parent Workshops are held from time to time with a view to introducing a variety of cultural insights and inspiration to parents so that they may integrate these into family life. Some recent workshops have involved sacred geometry, book discussions, eurythmy, lyre playing, singing and stained glass.

POLICIES

All School policies and procedures are held in the School office and they can be viewed on request. The following section summarises some of the key policies around behaviour & discipline. They are designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for the care and protection of children.

Supporting Positive Student Behaviour and Discipline

The School's approach to behaviour and discipline varies depending on the different stages of child development.

Kindergarten

- Children will be encouraged to imitate the example of the teacher in class time.
- In the playground children will be encouraged to play constructively in organised games and free play.
- Children who repeatedly do not imitate the teacher's example will be encouraged to do so by individual attention.
- Children who do not play constructively will be redirected and supervised in other organised play.
- Unsafe behaviour will be reprimanded and closer supervision applied.
- Moral guidance is given in story form. The School finds this method much more effective than giving abstract rules, which have little meaning to a child before ten years of age.

Primary

- Children are expected to respect the authority of the teacher(s) in and out of the classroom.
- In the playground, where supervision is more general, the children will be encouraged to play constructively or continue with ongoing work activities, in an atmosphere of respect for nature, their surroundings, equipment and supervising teachers.
- Equal rights will apply to all children in relation to behaviour – each child will respect the rights of each other child.

- Children who are disrespectful to the teacher's authority will be reprimanded, and/or redirected to more formally supervised activities. In severe cases of disruption of class activities children will be sent to a support teacher and specifically engaged in work.
- Continued or repeated disrespectful or disruptive behaviour in or out of class will be the subject of parent/teacher discussion. If meetings are unproductive and no progress is made a child may be suspended or expelled from the School.

High School

- Students will be encouraged to develop an independent and positive attitude toward learning, under the guidance of teachers, in and out of the classroom.
- Students will be encouraged to develop a sense of community through cooperation and equality in all group activities.
- High school students will model appropriate behaviour to the younger children.
- Students who do not develop an individual and positive attitude to learning will be redirected to more specific supervised tasks. In severe cases of disruption of class activities students will be sent to the Principal and specifically engaged in work.
- Repeated negative attitude or behaviour in students before the age of sixteen will be the subject of parent/teacher discussion. Unfruitful results may lead to suspension or expulsion.
- Repeated negative attitude or behaviour in students aged sixteen and over may be discussed with the students themselves, if deemed appropriate by the College of Teachers.
- Students who violate equality of rights in or out of class will be reprimanded and/or redirected to individual work.

Generally

- Students are supervised at all times in the school day.
- The School prohibits the use of corporal punishment in disciplining students.
- The School does not explicitly or implicitly sanction the administering of corporal punishment by non school persons, including parents, to enforce discipline at the School or for any other reason.

- The School is vigilant in regard to bullying. Discussions with the parents of perpetrators and victims must lead to a positive change in behaviour to ensure continued enrolment of students who participate in bullying.

If the Principals consider that a student is guilty of a serious breach of the School's expectations or has otherwise engaged in conduct which is prejudicial to the School or its students or staff, a Principal, after meeting with, and discussing the issues with the parents/guardians, may suspend the student permanently or temporarily after discussion with the College of Teachers.

No remission of fees will apply for any suspensions or expulsion.

Grievances

Suggestions

The School welcomes suggestions from parents as a method of continually improving the School. Meetings with the teachers offer an informal mode of communication, however, formal suggestions can be made by sending them in writing to the Principal. All formal suggestions will be acknowledged and considered by the School. They will be discussed by the College of Teachers at a staff meeting and referred to the Board of Directors, where necessary. The parent making the suggestion will be informed in a timely manner in writing of the outcome of their suggestion. If they feel that the outcome is not satisfactory they should appeal in writing to the School's Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will make a final decision regarding the suggestion and inform the parent in writing in a timely manner.

Complaints

A complaint may be defined as an assertion made against a specific staff member or the School or any member of the school community that **does not** involve a serious breach¹ of legislation or policy.

Newcastle Waldorf School acknowledges that misunderstandings, concerns or conflict may arise from time to time within the School Community. In the first instance, it is best to discuss concerns with the Class Teacher or the Principal(s).

¹ 'Serious Breach' is defined as of a nature which, if proven, would have a reasonable prospect of leading to criminal or disciplinary action.

If the issue is not resolved, or is not appropriate for discussion informally, we encourage parents to raise the concern by using the 'Complaints Procedure' as detailed in the School's Grievances Policy. The Policy can be accessed in the School Office or on the School website.

Allegations

An allegation may be defined as an assertion made against a specific staff member, contractor, volunteer or any other persons associated with the care and protection of a child or young person that **involves a serious breach** of legislation that may place that child or young person at risk of harm.

In addition to providing a caring and creative educational environment, Newcastle Waldorf School is also committed to the protection of children from physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, child sexual abuse and domestic violence. All staff members are aware that the 'Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998' requires for MANDATORY reporting of a child or young person at 'risk of significant harm'. All staff are also familiar with their requirements as outlined in the Newcastle Waldorf School's Child Protection Policy.

A person wishing to make an allegation should use the 'Allegations Procedure' as detailed in the School's Grievances Policy. The Policy can be accessed in the School Office or on the School website.

Contact Information

Newcastle Waldorf School
30 – 36 Reservoir Road
Glendale NSW 2285

Phone: (02) 4954 4853 (office – leave a message if it is not an emergency)

Emergency Phone: 0491 163 961 (only in case of emergency)

Email: office (at) newcastlewaldorfschool.nsw.edu.au

Website: www.newcastlewaldorfschool.nsw.edu.au