

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| CONTENTS | 1 |
| WELCOME | 2 |
| Monday to Friday | 2 |
| Office Hours | 2 |
| BACKGROUND | 4 |
| What is Waldorf/Steiner Education? | 4 |
| About Rudolf Steiner | 4 |
| A Brief History of the Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten | 5 |
| Organisation of the School | 6 |
| The Company | 6 |
| The College of Teachers | 6 |
| The Administrative Council | 6 |
| Parent Groups | 6 |
| School Community Groups | 7 |
| Administrative Team | 7 |
| Maintenance and Cleaning | 7 |
| Class Carers | 7 |
| THE CURRICULUM | 8 |
| Educational Principles | 8 |
| The Curriculum | 8 |
| Playgroup | 10 |
| Ring- a- Rosie | 10 |
| Kindergarten | 10 |
| Prep | 10 |
| Daily Rhythm | 11 |
| The Class Teacher | 11 |
| Epochs | 11 |
| Specialist Subjects | 11 |
| The school has a highly qualified team of specialist teachers who contribute a wonderful range of subjects to the curriculum. This depth of curriculum enriches our children's education. | 11 |
| Craft | 12 |
| Music | 12 |
| Eurythmy | 12 |
| Sport, Games and Gym | 12 |
| Outdoor Education – Excursions and Camps | 12 |
| Special Needs | 12 |
| YOU AND YOUR SCHOOL | 14 |
| Enrolment Applications | 14 |
| Starting and Finishing Times | 14 |
| Attendance | 14 |
| School Newsletter | 14 |
| Behaviour and Discipline | 14 |
| School Rules | 14 |
| Specific School Rules at Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten | 15 |
| Travel Arrangements | 15 |
| Parking | 15 |
| Dress Code | 15 |
| Clothing and Jewellery | 16 |
| Footwear | 16 |
| Hair | 16 |
| Hats | 16 |
| Wet Weather | 16 |
| Name Tags | 17 |
| Food | 17 |
| School Lunches | 17 |
| Food in the Early Childhood Area | 17 |
| Recycling | 17 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Television | 17 |
| School Records | 17 |
| Phone List | 17 |
| Class Meetings | 17 |
| Parent Teacher Interviews | 18 |
| Communication Policy..... | 18 |
| EVENTS AT THE SCHOOL | 18 |
| Festivals | 18 |
| Spring Fair..... | 18 |
| Open Days..... | 18 |
| Class Plays | 18 |
| Information Evenings | 18 |
| Workshops and Talks | 19 |
| Musical Performances | 19 |
| FEES AND CHARGES | 19 |
| School Funds..... | 19 |
| Tuition Fees..... | 19 |
| Fee Assistance..... | 19 |
| Additional Charges | 19 |
| Music Tuition | 19 |
| Recorders | 19 |
| Camps | 19 |
| Stringed Instrument..... | 19 |
| Swimming..... | 19 |
| Tax Deductible Donations..... | 19 |
| FOOD FOR THOUGHT | 20 |
| Education for our Times..... | 20 |
| Preschool and Kindergarten | 21 |
| Primary School..... | 23 |
| High School..... | 24 |
| OTHER RECOMMENDED | 26 |

Please do not hesitate to contact us to clarify any information contained in this handbook.

Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten

Phone: 5470 6235

Fax: 5470 6237

E-mail:
enquiries@castlemainesteinerschool.com.au

www.castlemainesteinerschool.com.au

School Hours

Monday to Friday

8.45 am – 3.30 pm

(3.15 pm finish for younger classes)

Office Hours

Monday - Friday (during term)

8.30 am to 4.00 pm

The office is staffed part time during school holidays.

WELCOME

Welcome to your journey with the Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten. We look forward to an exciting and rewarding time of involvement with your family in the many aspects of Steiner Education offered by this school.

This Handbook contains important information about Steiner Education, the organisation of this school, various school policies, and will include relevant and current attachments such as financial information, staff lists and terms dates.

The Handbook is for parents in the school as well as prospective families seeking information about the school.

***“Our highest endeavour must be to
develop free human beings, who are
able out of their own initiative to
impart purpose and direction to their
lives.”
Rudolf Steiner***

BACKGROUND

What is Waldorf/Steiner Education?

The first Waldorf/Steiner school was established in the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart (Germany) for the children of the workers. It was a free school.

Rudolf Steiner did not really want his name attached to the name of the education lest it appear sectarian. Hence the school became the Waldorf School.

Over time, however, his name has crept into the names of many schools so that now one can find the education being referred to both as Steiner Education and Waldorf Education.

Rudolf Steiner had extraordinary insight into the processes of human development. He made it clear that already in our time, and increasingly in the future, sound practical undertakings in all spheres of life need to have their foundations in a deeper insight into the nature of the human being and the reactions that exist between humans and the wider world. One aspect of his work was in the field of education. Steiner also undertook innovative work in the areas of architecture, biodynamics, mathematics and science.

Teachers in a Steiner school share a commitment to deepening their understanding of the growing human being and the pedagogical indications that arise out of this knowledge.

But what really characterizes a Steiner School?

It is a place where three qualities are focused on:

- A reverence for all that humanity has been and experienced in the past, together with a reverence for the being of the child.
- A love and enthusiasm for the potential within the being of each child.
- The belief that we are all capable of achieving a renewed understanding of ourselves and the child, and that it is through this understanding that we can best help the child to unfold and develop their capacities in a balanced and harmonious way.

The Castlemaine Steiner School is a member of the Rudolf Steiner Schools Association of Australia and has regular

contact with other Victorian and Australian Rudolf Steiner Schools.

Steiner schools are non-denominational. The philosophical and spiritual basis is not taught to the children - rather it forms the source for the teachers' understanding of human development and provides indications for curriculum development.

There are over 800 Steiner Schools around the world and a growing number of schools in Australia. There are currently approximately eighty Steiner schools and kindergartens in Australia.

About Rudolf Steiner

Rudolf Steiner was born in 1861 in Kraljevic (then in Austria, now in Yugoslavia), the son of a minor railway official. From an early age, Steiner was aware that the reality of the spiritual world was as certain as that of the physical. He devoted much of his life to deepening his knowledge of the spiritual world.

He was educated at the Technical University in Vienna, where he specialised in mathematics and science. His scientific ability was acknowledged when he was asked to edit Goethe's writings on nature.

Steiner's doctoral dissertation, 'Truth and Knowledge', was his first substantial philosophical work, which he states was a result of 'introspective observation' following the methods of 'Natural Science'.

This line of thought and experience was expanded on in his book, 'The Philosophy of Freedom', published in 1894.

Rudolf Steiner believed that through his attachment to material things, man had largely lost the ability to participate in spiritual processes. He felt that it was possible to regain this spiritual perception by training the intellect to look beyond the physical realm.

His whole way of working addressed many fundamental spiritual issues, such as the being of man, the nature and purpose of freedom, the meaning of evolution, the relation of man to nature, and life after death and before birth. Steiner went on to publish more than 50 titles, and these form the body of knowledge which he named 'Anthroposophy', or Science of the Spirit. In 1912 he founded the Anthroposophical Society.

A Brief History of the Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten

During 1987, a series of meetings was held in Ballarat and Bendigo and several smaller towns in between, to bring together people interested in Steiner Education. Two important decisions ultimately came from these meetings.

1. To establish the Steiner school in the Castlemaine area.
2. To begin with a kindergarten - truly a 'children's garden' - which would be the gateway to the school.

With hard work and a strong commitment, this shared vision was brought to fruition.

The Castlemaine Steiner Kindergarten began life in 1988 as 'White Gums' in White Gum Road, Barkers Creek in a studio on the property of one of the children, and this then led to the development of the school. The school and kindergarten then moved to The Penny School in Maldon for three years, (a National Trust classified, old school building).

Eighteen acres of land was purchased in 1995, just seven kilometers from the historic town of Castlemaine from which our school takes its name. The land is flat, and at the time of purchase was a sheep paddock and very undernourished. Apart from a few mature trees the land was without anything more than a bit of grass and while there was one dam on the property, it was unfortunately salt affected.

Using a permaculture design from David Holmgren (one of our past parents), sound biodynamic methods and with generous input from parents and friends, the transformation of the land has been close to miraculous. Well in excess of 2000 trees have been planted and tree-planting continues as an integral part of our grounds development.

We were able to commence the first of our buildings in 1995 with the assistance of a Commonwealth Government grant. The school is architect-designed by Des Cullen, an ex-parent of the school, and constructed with rammed earth. In 1996 the school moved to the specially designed present-day school and kindergarten in Muckleford, on the outskirts of Castlemaine.

Our parent community undertook to build the kindergarten building, which also opened in 1996. This distinctive mud brick

building was designed by Bow Thompson, a parent at the school, who also oversaw its construction. (Government grants were not available to build kindergartens). It was a wonderful community effort with fundraising and mud-brick making as well as actual construction. The kindergarten has its own children's garden and play area including sandpit, water flow form, and chooks.

Buildings, Environment & Grounds

Steiner Education recognises that children are deeply affected by the physical environment. Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten's architect designed, rammed earth classrooms are aesthetically and thoughtfully decorated and make careful use of colour and shape to provide an atmosphere of harmony and beauty in which the children learn.

Our facilities now include the beautiful mud brick Kindergarten, eight architect-designed rammed earth classrooms, a purpose-built Prep room, a junior and senior library, a large Multi-Purpose and Music building, specialist utility areas and a purpose-built Eurythmy room.

The school has a dynamic ten-year Master Building Plan which outlines a further three stages of building development over the next eight to ten years. This includes:

- an Administration area,
- an extension to the Multi-Purpose room (stage and facilities) and
- Craft/Handwork design centre.

Our buildings have already been awarded listing as a significant site in the Shire of Mount Alexander by the Architects' Institute of Victoria.

Our magnificent new Multi-Purpose building is available for use by the local arts community for performances and exhibitions.

The school's play spaces and gardens continue to be developed. We have extensive play areas, a hard court area, two ovals for ball sports, shade-covered sandpits for digging and construction, and a creative timber play frame built by Peter Foran, a parent in the school. Materials are made available for the construction of temporary cubbies by children. The younger children have their own beautiful play areas with a cubby, sandpit, swings and garden.

The school welcomes the development of a **Year 9-12 Steiner Stream** at Castlemaine Secondary College. This will enable

students from our school to enjoy a full Steiner education in this district.

Organisation of the School

Castlemaine Steiner School is a non-profit Company Limited by guarantee. The school has no single principal, but is run by the College of Teachers. Class teachers work together as a 'round table', decisions being made by consensus. This is known as the College of Teachers.

The Company

The Company provides the legal entity of the school and is responsible for the governance of the school. The Board of Directors of the Company delegates the daily running of the school to the College of Teachers and the Administrative Council. Membership of the Company is limited to 11 members. Board members and Directors must be actively studying Anthroposophy. The company oversees the correct audit of accounts and annual returns to the Australian Securities Commission. The Company meets annually and as required.

The current Directors of the Company are Jeff Onans, Helen Butcher and Anne Perry.

The College of Teachers

The College of Teachers is responsible for developing and overseeing the direction of the school. All teachers holding responsibility for a class of children are members of the College of Teachers. The College of Teachers performs the functions of a school Principal, operating collectively and by consensus. Each member therefore has equal responsibility for the running of the school, in particular the educational and teaching matters.

As such the College constitutes the heart of the school, and holds an awareness of the total functioning of the school. They meet twice weekly to support and consult with one another on educational matters, and discuss, formulate and review the school curriculum, school policy and the day to day running of the school.

The whole College has delegated many administrative and business matters to the College Facilitator position and to a smaller executive group which meets weekly to deal with regular administrative issues. The College of Teachers has responsibility for staff selection.

For current membership of the College of Teachers see the website.

The Administrative Council

The Administrative Council consists of representatives of the Board of Directors, the College of Teachers and parents. It assists the College of Teachers in the administrative matters of the school.

This group has been mandated by the Company to correctly manage the business and administrative operations of the school and to ensure that the school meets its legal and financial obligations. This group meets monthly. Several mandated sub-committees and working groups address specific aspects of the school, such as the Buildings and Grounds subcommittee, the Human Resources subcommittee, the Audit subcommittee, the Building Master Planning Group and the Strategic Plan working group.

For current membership of the Administrative Council contact the office.

Parent Groups

A range of parents and friends groups assist the College and the Administrative Council in caring for the social needs of the school community, and contribute significantly to the fundraising for the school.

Parents and friends of the school meet in various working groups for the nurturance of the school community. Fostering community spirit is an important aspect of parents' work. The creation of an atmosphere of caring and support within the whole school community is seen in the class carer network, the 'heart to mouth' food support which provides emergency meals for families, the craft group, the study group, a parents' singing group and adult drama group made up of parents and teachers.

Parents also play a significant role in fundraising and organising regular events for the school, in particular the Spring Fair. Parent participation in Working Bees ensures that many practical projects are completed around the school, whilst building friendships and good will.

All these aspects of the school bring together the many creative impulses of our parent community.

For the current contact person for each group please ask at the school office.

School Community Groups

The school community groups are as follows:

- Fundraising Group (meets weekly when needed)
- Study Group
- Craft Group
- Singing Group
- Drama Group
- Parent Education

See the office for current contact people and meeting times.

Administrative Team

The College Facilitator attends to administrative matters on behalf of the College of Teachers. This frees the full College to be more involved in developing the curriculum, child studies and the spiritual development of the school. The College Facilitator is also available to deal with specific parent concerns. Parents should always first contact the class teacher with any questions about their child.

The Administration Team of the school comprises the positions of Business / Marketing Manager, the Accountant, the Book-keeper, the College Facilitator, the Administrative Co-ordinator and the Administrative Assistants.

Maintenance and Cleaning

The school employs a Safety and Maintenance Officer to oversee repairs and maintenance on the site. This work is undertaken with a mind to beauty and efficiency of development and maintenance work.

Parents participate in regular Class Working Bees to ensure the ongoing development of the school site.

Cleaning staff maintain the aesthetics of the environment.

The school gardener is transforming the 'heartlands' (the central school garden) into a beautiful setting in which to work and learn. The school gardens also link directly with curriculum areas such as the Class 3 building project and the horticultural program.

Class Carers

Class carers are parent volunteers in each class, nominated annually by the class teacher as a liaison point with the class community. The class carer assists with

communication across the class, organises 'heart to mouth' emergency meals for families, assists in the orientation of new families and generally assists the class teacher in organising class events.

School Policies

The school has an extensive range of policies which guide the school's educational, administrative and employment related operations. These are available on request. These policies ensure that the school meets the registration requirements of the Registered Schools Board and the harmonious operations of all aspects of the school.

Our school policies on Communication, Discipline and Bullying, Clothing and Food are distributed regularly to the school community.

THE CURRICULUM

Educational Principles

The aim of Steiner Education is to enable and support the healthy development of the whole child, so that they “are able out of their own initiative, to impart purpose and direction to their lives”
Rudolf Steiner

“The need for imagination, a sense of truth and a feeling of responsibility – these are the three forces which are the very nerve of education”
Rudolf Steiner

A Steiner Education is child centred and teacher directed. It is an education that relates specifically at all levels to the developmental stages of the child. Programs are prepared and directed by the teacher in response to the children's educational needs.

The Curriculum

The Steiner curriculum is based on a universal pattern of child development which provides the basis for both the curriculum content and the way in which this is presented to the children. By integrating the arts, humanities and sciences, it strives to give students a picture of the whole world and to educate not just the intellect, but the whole child.

Every aspect of Steiner education seeks to develop the proper relationship between intellectual, physical and emotional development – the head, hand and heart. Thus each activity, each, day, each week and each term, will reflect this ‘head, heart and hand’ balance.

The approach is always from the whole to the parts, the concrete to the abstract, so that learning takes place in an integrated way. Subjects are studied in relation to each other so that children perceive their unity, rather than splitting them into separate compartments.

Attention is paid to the learning process rather than the product, and engaging the child's imagination during the journey rather than focusing only on the destination. This child-centred approach is built around the

natural rhythms of the day, the week and the year, and the celebration of festivals and special occasions forms an important part of the life of the school.

The Steiner curriculum is comprehensively co-educational in that all students, irrespective of gender or ability, are expected to participate in the full range of activities. The Castlemaine Steiner School is committed to supporting students from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds

- Castlemaine Steiner School gives expression to the general principles of Rudolf Steiner education by making a continual analysis of the important elements of society and culture impacting on children's lives.
- We regularly evaluate the extent to which our educational programs prepare children to constructively participate in and contribute to contemporary culture.
- We embrace an approach to the education of children which addresses the current context of children's lives.
- Our **Strategic Plan**, which is reviewed annually, specifically ensures that programs and curriculum remain relevant to the needs of our children as they face the demands of the twenty first century.
- The school has a strategy to respond to the **National Safe Schools Framework**. Promoting and providing a supportive school in which all students can expect to feel safe is essential. Students have a fundamental right to learn in a safe and supportive environment and to be treated with respect. The Australian community rightly expects authorities managing our schools, both in government and non-government sectors, to take all available measures to ensure the safety of students, to support students and to set out clearly, transparently and explicitly the policies and programs they have in place to fulfil this important responsibility.

The Framework presents a way of achieving a shared vision of physical and emotional safety and well-being for all students in all Australian schools. It encourages all members of the school community to:

- Value diversity,
- Contribute positively to the safety and well being of themselves and others,

- Act independently, justly, cooperatively and responsibly, and
- Contribute to the implementation of appropriate strategies to create and maintain a safe and supportive school.

The aim of the Framework is to assist all school communities in creating safe and supportive schools where:

- Bullying, harassment and violence are minimised, and
- Students receive support on issues related to child abuse and neglect.

Implementation of the Framework is required by the Australian Federal government in all Australian schools.

Early Childhood Faculty

“If a child has been able to play, to give up their whole living being to the world around, they will be able, in the serious tasks of later life, to devote themselves with confidence and purpose to the service of the world”

Rudolf Steiner

The Early Childhood teachers know well that the child learns from everything that surrounds them in their environment. Therefore the teacher's task is to create an environment worthy of the child's powers of unquestioning imitation.

Special care is taken to create a play environment which is beautiful, unhurried and secure. There is rhythm and balance in daily and weekly plans, and through the teacher's guidance, a healthy balance between active pursuits such as circle games, and more receptive, quiet activities such as drawing, painting and listening to stories. Children can experience the pleasure of solitary play and the rewards of being part of the group.

Children learn their ability to concentrate, focus and think creatively when they are given opportunities to participate fully in their play activity.

Experience has shown that children are well prepared for primary school by the foundation our early childhood programs provide.

Entry Age Policy

Children will be enrolled in:

- Ring-a-Rosie, generally, when they turn four years old.
- Kindergarten the year they turn five years of age.
- Prep program the year they turn six years old.
- To be eligible to enter Class 1, a child must be going to turn seven by the end of December of their Class 1 year.

Playgroup

The school offers regular weekly playgroup sessions, run by a member of the Early Childhood faculty. The playgroup is an opportunity for parents and young children to come together with other families who are striving for a wholesome and quality space for children. Songs, stories and the rhythm of quiet and active play are carefully

planned to create a safe and joyous environment. This program offers a wonderful introduction to the life of the school and provides support and education to parents in the children's early years.

Ring- a- Rosie

Ring-a-Rosie acts as a bridge between Playgroup and Kindergarten. It is for children when they turn four years old. This once a week session provides an ideal stepping stone for children into the Kindergarten program.

Kindergarten

Children generally attend the Kindergarten for three or four sessions per week in the year they are turning five years old. The daily rhythm of activities provides times for creative play. Children's learning is nourished through imitation of calm and focused adults. Through play children learn sharing and co-operation with others in the group. Songs, verses, games and festivals connect the child to the seasonal cycles throughout the year. The tradition of telling well loved fairy tales, which deal imaginatively with the joys and sorrows of life, gives children the foundations for creativity in their play. Children learn painting, wool crafts, sewing, and beeswax modelling.

Our Kindergarten's beautiful home-like environment is truly a 'children's garden', abundant with natural playthings and space for imaginative play.

Prep

The guiding principle for the child's learning in our Prep program is still that of imitation and the value of play. In a loving and warm environment, children join the adults in activities such as baking, sewing, singing, painting and gardening.

As in the Kindergarten, time is allowed each day for creative play which fosters social and interactive skills, as well as initiative and imagination. These are the foundations for later intellectual development.

Again through stories, verses and festivals children experience the seasonal cycles of each year. Festivals give the whole class community the opportunity to celebrate with wonder and gratitude the gifts of nature and the passing seasons.

Our Prep provides a naturally joyful and reverent space for children to prepare for later school life.

The Primary School Curriculum – Class 1 to Class 8

What makes Steiner education different?

Steiner education is based on the inspirations of Rudolf Steiner. The curriculum content and approach relates primarily to the natural process of human development. The holistic approach towards a healthy body, healthy feeling life and healthy thinking is paramount. Rudolf Steiner identified the process of human development in seven-year stages. We are primarily concerned with the first two stages: 0-7 years and 7-14 years, which will lay the foundations for the rest of our lives.

In the first seven-year phase in our Early Childhood programs we educate through imitation to nurture the development of the body and the will. In the second seven years we educate through the feeling life of the child and the child's imagination. We seek not merely to impart knowledge but to form the capacity for creative thinking itself.

In the second stage (7-14 years old) there are several aspects of Steiner education which are different to mainstream education. Four unique features of Steiner education are:

1. The Class teacher remains with the class from Class 1 to Class 8.
2. The Main Lesson structure.
3. The integration of the arts across the whole curriculum.
4. The slow introduction of literacy and numeracy over the first two or three years.

Daily Rhythm

The rhythmic structuring of the school day is integral to Steiner Education.

The Main Lesson: the morning session introduces all new content. A Main Lesson topic may be studied for three to six week blocks or as required.

The Middle session: the teacher works with practice sessions developing skills from previous Main Lessons.

The afternoon session: is devoted to physical activities, including painting, craft, sculpture and sport

The Class Teacher

The progression of the Class teacher with the class is a strongly unique feature of

Steiner Education. From Class 1 (7years old) to Class 8 (14 years old), the development of the child's feeling life is reflected in the deepening of their social being. To further nurture children's social relationships, the teacher of the class stays with the same group throughout the primary years. Thus education becomes a journey that the children and teacher take together, with ever enriching relationships across the whole class community.

Art

Art in many forms - poetry, drama, painting, sculpture, singing and movement – is an integral part of the main intellectual and academic learning and is not considered a separate or additional activity.

Epochs

Rudolf Steiner saw the process of human development mirrored in different stages of world history or epochs. Through learning about these epochs, the mythologies and wonderful imaginative pictures of history reflect the deeper inner truths of life and greatly nourish the children's learning.

The class teacher upholds the tradition of oral literature. Each class is told the stories from relevant mythologies.

Class 1: Fairy tales from around the world.

Class 2: Celtic myths, lives of saints, animal fables.

Class 3: The Old Testament, Hebrew mythology.

Class 4: Norse mythology.

Class 5: Ancient Persian mythology, Babylonian, Indian, Egyptian and Greek mythology and history.

Class 6: Ancient Roman history and the Middle Ages.

Class 7: Medieval Times, the Renaissance.

Class 8: French Revolution and Industrial Revolution, Introduction to Modern History.

Specialist Subjects

The school has a highly qualified team of specialist teachers who contribute a wonderful range of subjects to the curriculum. This depth of curriculum enriches our children's education.

Craft

Hand work is a vital area of the Steiner curriculum, harmonising and balancing the intellectual work undertaken by children. Through craft work certain qualities can be developed, such as perseverance and determination, concentration, an eye for beauty, colour and design, fine motor skills and particular technical skills. In craft the school works with fine quality natural materials to encourage care and respect for the handwork process.

It is helpful for parents to take a supportive interest in the progress of their child's craft activities. Appreciation and respect for the beautiful and useful items created are encouraged.

Parent involvement in craft is encouraged and appreciated. This need will be communicated to parents through class teachers or class carers.

Music

Music is a strong part of our curriculum with both a classroom music program and a specialist stringed instrument program. In the classroom all students learn recorder and singing. Music plays an important role in the festivals of the school.

The stringed music program is introduced in Class 3. Every child at this stage commences on a violin, viola or cello.

Class Plays

During the year each class presents at least one play related to the epoch being studied, either during the day or in the evening, for parents, relatives and friends. These are wonderful events of very high quality and not to be missed.

Second Languages – French and German

German is introduced in Prep and followed through to Class 8. French is studied in the senior classes. This helps develop children's oral and aural skills. Through learning other languages a child is also introduced to whole new cultures and a wider concept of the world.

Eurythmy

Eurythmy is an art of movement that came into being early last century. Movement through gesture and dance has played a vital part in every culture and community. Movement expresses people's experience

of the world, their interpretation of the beautiful and the true.

Movement which is filled with meaning, like Eurythmy, can enliven our senses and make our imagination more flexible. It brings us in touch with our feelings which are sometimes dulled if they have no full outlet in our daily routines.

Our school will strive at all times to provide Eurythmy in the curriculum. It is, however, the domain of highly trained specialist teachers who may not always be available.

Sport, Games and Gym

Sport and games are planned to correspond with the child's developmental needs. Sport and games develop children as co-operative individuals, rather than forcing children into one-sided competitive positions. Weekly Gym lessons encourage flexibility and coordination. Swimming lessons take place for classes 3 – 5.

Outdoor Education – Excursions and Camps

Class camps and excursions take place each year for classes 3 and above. Camps and excursions are not optional as they are seen as an important part of the child's social development, and are most often integrated with the curriculum and main lesson work.

A note advising details and costs of camps and excursions is sent home to parents in advance. Any outstanding money is added to your invoice at the beginning of the next term. Permission notes must be signed for all camps.

Extra Lesson and Support Education

Class 1 and 2 students undertake Extra Lesson classes which form the foundations for confident learning across the curriculum. Students from Class 3 upwards who may need additional support in the development of literacy and numeracy skills can be referred to our Support Education teacher for 1:1 tuition in school time.

Library Skills

The school librarian offers library and relevant research skills to all students, both individually and in class work.

Special Needs

Increasingly in our times children come to school with special learning needs, developmental needs, behavioural or social skill needs. While many of these needs can

be met within the class, one-to-one tuition or small group work outside the child's usual class situation may also be offered.

It is essential that assessment of children's special learning needs is discussed during the enrolment application process.

YOU AND YOUR SCHOOL

Enrolment Applications

If you have a pre-school child, or have friends and neighbours who intend enrolling at this school, please contact the office for a preliminary enrolment application form. It is important for the school's future planning to have an accurate record of enrolments for the years ahead. As waiting lists grow, many families are enrolling their young children to secure a place at the school.

The school has an enrolments and application policy which outlines the process of entry to the school.

Priority for enrolment in the school is given to children who have moved through our Early Childhood program.

Classroom visits and an interview with the Class Teacher are vital steps in the enrolment process for children entering the school in later years. Class sizes for Classes 1-8 are limited to 25 students.

It is essential that all families have lodged and signed an enrolment application with the enrolment fee and the Conditions of Admission forms as part of their admission to the school. Families may be placed on a Waiting List if their class is full.

Starting and Finishing Times

Punctuality is important at our school. School starts at **8.45 a.m.** Please give your child time to settle him/herself, put away their bag etc – by arriving at 8.40am.

Kindergarten hours are 8.45 am -12.30 pm for morning sessions and till 3.15 pm for all day sessions.

Prep hours are 8.45 am – 3.00 pm.
Class 1-4 hours are 8.45 am – 3.15 pm.
Class 5-8 hours are 8.45 am – 3.30 pm.

School finishes are the above listed times unless otherwise specified on special days.

Children should be collected promptly. They remain under staff supervision for collection. For safety reasons are **not** permitted to meet their parents at the car park.

Attendance

If your child is absent from school it is a legal requirement for the parent/guardian to notify the class teacher in writing (upon returning to school) of the reason for the absence. Absence notes for the year are circulated at the start of the year and are available in the office. Contacting the office is not sufficient.

School Newsletter

The **Penny for your Thoughts** newsletter is sent home with the oldest member of the family every fortnight. Taking the time to read the 'Penny' will keep you up to date with what is happening in the school, parent teacher meetings and coming events (Festivals, Fair, Open Day, Information Evenings etc) and any special activities for the children.

Behaviour and Discipline

The school has a progressive Discipline and Behaviour Policy based on mutually respectful relationships. It includes classroom behaviour management, bullying, and playground behaviour.

We make our rules and consequences conscious by placing them in the context of the rights and responsibilities of all students and teachers.

It is the basic right of all children to feel safe at all times. The purpose of the rules is to ensure that happens. The school has adopted strategies to meet the requirements of the National Safe Schools Framework in order to ensure clear responses to bullying, harassment and instances of child abuse.

This policy can be viewed at the office on application.

School Rules

Part of our school philosophy is a belief that a vital part of living on Earth is caring for others and for the Earth itself. We believe that this leads to peace and deep happiness. The school is responsive to the National Safe Schools Framework.

Therefore, when students or teachers join our school we expect them to join in a community life where:

- *we look after one another,*
- *we try to be helpful and open to others,*
- *we help look after the buildings and grounds, and*

- *we strive to maintain, and with maturity to build, a positive environment in which we will all grow to greater human freedom and expression.*

On a practical level this expresses itself in such obvious rules as:

- *speaking decently,*
- *looking after health,*
- *avoiding breaking thing, and*
- *learning and cultivating positive attitudes.*

Specific School Rules at Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten

- *Class 3 and above can go across the creek when mown, on the oval and can play ball games.*
- *Soccer and football are played in Terms 2 and 3 only.*
- *Balls are only to be thrown outside.*
- *Hats covering the neck and shading the face are to be worn in Terms 1 and 4.*
- *Tops that cover the shoulders are to be worn outside.*
- *Plain, practical clothing please.*
- *Shoes (no thongs) are to be worn outside.*
- *A pair of inside shoes or slippers is to be worn inside.*
- *Children should not play in the toilet area.*
- *The library is a special area and is not for playing.*
- *The creek is not for playing in, and we want to keep it clean. Please don't throw 'unnatural' items in creek.*
- *It is unsafe to play in the car park – this area is out of bounds.*
- *It is too dangerous to play among the reeds. This area is out of bounds.*
- *Cubbies are great, but remember nails, metal and tunnelling are not suitable.*
- *After school, children need to be under the pergola / shade area so the teacher on duty can keep a close watch on the car park.*
- *Please don't bring toys to school. A comforting doll or small soft toy can be an exception and up to two Matchbox cars can be brought to play with in the sandpit.*
- *Speak decently – bad language is not acceptable.*
- *Appropriate food – see food policy.*
- *No chewing gum or lollies – healthy lunches only please.*
- *No bicycle riding in school grounds.*
- *No domestic pets are allowed on the school property at any time, including*

weekends, holidays and other non-school days.

- *No climbing on fences, gates or trees.*

Your child's class teacher will be working continually with the fundamental concepts of rights and responsibilities in age-appropriate ways.

Along with rights come responsibilities. Children need to be fully aware that by responsibly following the rules they are helping to ensure the school is a safe and pleasant place to be.

Copies of the Discipline Policy are available from the office.

Travel Arrangements

Many families participate in car pools from outer areas such as Daylesford, Kyneton and Maldon. A school bus brings children from Chewton, through Castlemaine and Campbells Creek to and from the school each day. Other school buses may be used according to availability of spaces.

Please try not to change your child's travel arrangements at short notice. The end of the school day should be one of happy anticipation. Children whose travel plans often change may become tense and unsure as the day progresses.

Parking

Please park cars carefully on the exterior of the parking loop. Do not park on the inner side as this means children will cross the busy thoroughfare. For obvious safety reasons, please ensure that children exiting cars always walk on the pathways provided and do not cross the car park.

It is important to walk with your child to and from the car.

Please keep your speed down to walking pace as you travel along the school driveway.

Dress Code

At this school we have a dress code that considers both the inner and outer needs of the child.

Colour and image have a powerful impact on us every day. Colour nourishes the soul and spirit. As children are so receptive to their immediate environment, we must become conscious of the effect of colour and images. We can be stimulated by the

cheeky nature of red, enlivened by the brilliance of orange or calmed by tranquil shades of blue.

We ask that children do not wear fluorescent colours, due to their strident and jarring effect. Think not only of your child when they dress each morning, but also of the difference they will make to everyone at school each day. It is a wonderful opportunity and a privilege to wear simple, practical clothing that also reflects the individual.

A great deal of care has been taken with the quality of the school environment, both outside and inside. The attention to this detail is quite deliberate. The relative lack of posters and visual information on the walls, the use of clean, clear colours and the interesting lines and surfaces of the architecture all reflect an important underlying educational principle. Namely, that the sensory impressions received by the child, particularly the visual and auditory impressions, work deeply into the child, particularly the young child, and have significant influence on the ultimate health of the developing human being. Beauty and the sense of it can only be educated with beauty, and our senses are already overloaded with a chaos of images and information – most of it unsolicited by us.

Part of the special character of the Castlemaine Steiner School is that we do not have a school uniform. However the following dress code applies.

Clothing and Jewellery

Students' dress should be clean and neat (no torn or ripped clothing). Common sense is required at all times to equip students for fast-changing weather conditions. Items of clothing and jewellery should not carry slogans or pictures that run contrary to the spirit and rules of the school, eg advertisements or brand names which cannot be covered by the hand, and violent or frightening images.

Staff understand that some older students (Classes 6-8) are more influenced by the latest fashion trends, but what they wear and how they wear it is important. As these students provide an important role model for our younger children and represent the school in the wider community, we expect all clothing to be of an acceptable and functional style for all school activities, eg mini skirts are totally unacceptable, and t-shirts or tops need to cover the stomach

region. Transparent and see-through clothes are not appropriate, and this includes underwear worn as an over-dress or t-shirt.

Jewellery

Up to and including Class 5, NO jewellery (including watches) is to be worn to school. Limited jewellery may be worn by students in classes 6 to 8 provided that it does not distract or interrupt their ability to work in class. The Class Teacher will be the arbiter of this decision.

Jewellery must be removed during all sporting activities. The school takes no responsibility for the loss or damage of any items of jewellery, including watches.

Makeup

Makeup, including spray deodorant and perfume, is not permitted in any form in classes Prep to 5. Children will be expected to remove all makeup (including nail polish) worn to school.

From classes 6 to 8 a discrete application of makeup may be worn to school but it must not be applied at school. Makeup must not be brought to school.

Footwear

Students must wear shoes outside at all times as walking around in bare feet is not appropriate for our school environment. Thongs and light sandals are not appropriate. Slippers or inside shoes should be brought to school to wear in the school classrooms, especially in winter. Please note these should be plain and functional.

Hair

Hair is to be kept clean and tidy and be off the face. Dyed hair is not acceptable.

Hats

During the hotter months (terms 1 and 4), all children must bring a hat which gives a reasonable level of sun protection (ie not a baseball cap). This is required under State legislation. Children without hats will be limited to indoor areas.

Wet Weather

On rainy days children will only be allowed to play outside if they wear a woollen or waterproof hat and a waterproof coat and footwear. On cold days children must be warmly dressed to be allowed outside to play.

We ask that you respect the dress code and assist your child to make appropriate clothing choices where necessary.

Name Tags

Please label everything that your child brings to school: footwear, lunch boxes, bags, jumpers, coats, hats and anything else that may become separated from your child. For the older students this includes pencils, pens, rubbers, sharpeners etc. Please leave valuable or special items at home.

Please also check the lost property baskets at regular intervals, as all lost property is given to charity at the end of each term.

Food

If we all work together as a community, we can foster values about good health and nutrition and an increasing awareness about protecting our environment in as many ways as possible. Rudolf Steiner believed strongly that the food we eat affects not only our physical body but our mental and spiritual well-being also. For this reason we ask all parents to pack healthy lunches for school. The teachers have an interest in seeing that any food consumed at school is wholesome and nutritious.

The school has an Anaphylaxis and Allergy Policy outlining prevention and treatment for these conditions. All children with anaphylaxis or allergy problems must lodge a Management Plan at the office.

School Lunches

In response to the increasing prevalence in our society of children with severe (ie life-threatening) food allergy reactions, the school asks that no child at any level from Playgroup to Class 8 bring any peanuts or peanut products to school at any time, including festivals, working bees and fairs.

Ideally, a child's lunch should contain a healthy balance of nutritious foods.

Please note that no nuts, lollies, chocolates, chewing gum, fizzy drinks, chips or other recognised junk foods are to be eaten at school.

Food in the Early Childhood Area

The above statement on children's lunches applies. Where food is prepared for children at school, organic and biodynamic produce will be used whenever possible.

Where possible, at least one member of a food preparation team will have completed a recognised food-handling course.

Recycling

The school endeavours to recycle all waste material. Children are asked to take home all lunch wrappings or containers which cannot be put through the school's recycling program, eg lunch wrap, box drink containers.

Please send in birthday cakes without lollies (such as Smarties) as there are some children who have an allergic reaction to colouring and preservatives.

We thank you for your co-operation. We see this as a positive opportunity to all uphold these fundamental values, so that Rudolf Steiner education can be a truly holistic approach for the well-being of your child and future generations.

Television

Recent research shows that television watching adversely affects children's thinking, speaking, imagination, senses, physique, feelings and behaviour. It is important for parents to be aware of these facts. Some programs may be seen as appropriate for older classes. In general we discourage television watching and ask for your co-operation.

School Records

A record of your current Family Information is sent home at the beginning of each year to enable parents to update their information. It is most important that the office is informed when telephone numbers, addresses, emergency contacts change. The school has a Privacy Policy that conforms with current Privacy Legislation.

Phone List

A total school phone list is sent out from the office in term one.

A phone list of each child's class will be organised by class carers. This contains phone number, child's name and the names of parents.

Communication with Teachers

Class Meetings

Meetings between the class teacher and parents are an essential part of the school's

educational philosophy. They assist with the exchange of information and build bonds between child, teacher and parent.

They also provide a chance for you to:

- learn about the work your child is doing and will be doing during each term,
- share ideas about behaviours, expectations and needs of your child,
- understand what you can do to assist with the education of your child,
- discover more about the educational philosophy and teaching methods of the school, and
- observe the work of your child.

You are asked to attend one class meeting per term to discuss the curriculum and child development.

We will notify you of the dates of these meetings through the Penny, giving you at least one week's notice of the meeting date. Your attendance is important for the educational well-being of your child.

Parent Teacher Interviews

At least twice per year you are expected to attend an interview with the class teacher to discuss the specific progress of your child in the context of the class. These interviews and class meetings are a vital way for you to understand the educational and social development of your child in the school. They are also a key part of our assessment and reporting policy. Notice of these days appears on the yearly calendar and reminders appear in the Penny.

Communication Policy

If you are concerned about any aspect of the school or your child's experiences at school you should communicate in writing to the appropriate people.

For concerns about your child or the class, first speak to the Class teacher and if the concern remains, speak with another College member or write to the College of Teachers.

If your concern is related to financial aspects of the school, please address your correspondence to the Business Manager and Administrative Council.

Concerns and suggestions about the general nature and running of the school should be addressed in writing to the College of Teachers and the Administrative Council. The College Facilitator will also

respond to parent questions and concerns about educational matters.

EVENTS AT THE SCHOOL

Festivals

Harvest, Mid-winter, Whitsun & Spring are all celebrated with the children throughout the year to focus on the rhythms within nature, both within us and in the outer world. The celebration and reverence for the festivals weaves through the children's work. Parents, relatives and friends are invited to share in these celebrations.

Spring Fair

The Spring Fair, held in November, is one of the busiest and exciting times of the year for the whole school community. The Fair has now grown into a major community event which attracts many visitors and involves everyone at the school - parents, teachers and children. It is the one time of the year when every parent is expected to contribute some time to at least one activity for the Fair.

The strongest impression the Fair makes on both children and adults is as a joyful celebration of all that this School embodies.

Open Days

Open Days are held in May and October. These are days where the school and wider community have the opportunity to experience the school in operation and to find out more about Steiner education. All new parents are encouraged to attend at least one Open Day.

Class Plays

During the year each class presents at least one play related to the epoch being studied, (either during the day or in the evening) for their parents, relatives and friends. These are wonderful events of very high quality, not to be missed.

Information Evenings

These evenings are organised early in the school year to provide new and continuing parents in the school with a deeper understanding of Steiner education. Following the talk there is an opportunity to ask questions of a teacher representative and administrators. These sessions build on the information provided at Open Days.

Workshops and Talks

From time to time the school holds workshops/talks etc at school so that parents can be informed on topics of interest in relation to child development and other Anthroposophical areas. These are advertised in the Penny.

Musical Performances

Students present their accomplishments at regular informal soireés and at larger concerts at the end of each term.

FEES AND CHARGES

School Funds

The School derives its recurrent or operating expenditure from five main sources:

1. Fees and charges from parents.
2. State and Commonwealth Government funding on a per student basis.
3. Capital grants and other special purpose grants from the Commonwealth Government.
4. Fundraising by the parents and other special efforts.
5. Donations and grants from individuals, groups and philanthropic organisations.

Tuition Fees

Fees are due on the first day of each term. We realise that some parents may have trouble from time to time in meeting fees, and we ask these parents to contact the Accountant to arrange a Fee Agreement, for example payment by monthly installments or as negotiated. However, if fees are more than four weeks late without such a formal arrangement, the account may incur a penalty charge of \$25. The Conditions of Admission form must be signed on entry to the school.

See the attached Financial Information Sheet with the current schedule of Fees for each class level. This includes the provision of highest quality teaching and craft materials.

Fee Assistance

A Fee Assistance program supports families in financial crisis. A policy document is available from the office. Applications for Fee Assistance are received each November for the following year.

Additional Charges

In addition to tuition fees parents can expect to pay for the following items:

Music Tuition

An annual charge for music is charged to accounts each term for students from Class 3 upwards. See attached fee schedule.

Recorders

Class 1 - \$70 (approx).

Camps

Class 3-8 \$150-400 (approx).

Stringed Instrument

Class 3 children will need a stringed instrument. Prices range from \$200 upwards.

Swimming

Class 1- 8 \$65 (approx).

These charges are approximate only. Details will be forwarded and added to invoices.

Tax Deductible Donations

The school has a tax deductible library fund, bursary fund and building fund. We urge parents to contribute to these funds each year, in addition to the fees. Such donations are tax deductible for income tax purposes. It does not appear on your account to protect your tax deductibility. The Administrative Council encourages all families to contribute at least **\$200 per year** to this fund. Extra donations are very much valued as we continue our 10 year building program. Please consider whether you can afford a more substantial donation to increase the facilities your children, and those of the future, will enjoy at their school.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Education for our Times

(Reprinted with the kind permission of the author Ben Cherry).

Having recently returned from six months of travelling abroad, I can say that, though in each different place there are struggles and achievements that are unique, there are also world-wide issues which are occupying people's minds almost everywhere. One of these is education.

In many places, education is being hotly debated. Sometimes the response of the authorities is toward enforced rigidity, at others there is an open-mindedness to change; but almost everywhere the issues are the same: Why is it so hard for children to listen today? Why do many drop out of school? What is the cause of the violence of school children? Are educational standards actually lower than they were in previous generations? How is this possible? And so forth.

We could sum up all these questions in a single one. Is education meeting the real needs of our times?

To attempt to answer we need to look in two directions - outwardly toward what the outer world is requiring of young people, inwardly toward how children develop from birth to adulthood. The two are mysteriously interrelated.

From the outside come the familiar demands of modern industrial societies - requirements of academic achievement, skills, basic social ethics and so forth. This is throughout the modern world. Any contemporary educational method must respond to these - though there are very different ways of doing so.

This is fundamental, but it is not enough. For all our technological accomplishment, we face very great problems in the world today. Still now, starvation, war, human misery is endemic in many places. Violence is a world phenomenon and the incidence of new illnesses, such as AIDS, which cannot be cured by physical means, is growing. Behind the veneer of material well-being in many industrial nations we witness a dying nature and an alarming level of psychological and social disorder. There seem to be more learning difficulties amongst children than ever before. Our world economy is so complicated that no

one can predict with any certainty how things will be in two or three years' time. The list could go on.

Conventional attitudes lack the force to grapple with these world-wide problems. What outer circumstances require is actually the emergence of new human faculties.

To comprehend what is happening and to begin to find appropriate solutions, we have to penetrate beyond the outer surface of things. More than ever before there is the need, coming from within and from without, for us to find a new relationship with the spirit, in keeping with our modern consciousness and individuality.

We would say that this is the greatest need of our times. If we do not address it, then our contemporary struggles will remain incomprehensible and insoluble.

Science is actually very close to being able to touch on certain deeper mysteries of the world - and yet repeatedly it shies off and fastens itself to purely materialistic concepts. Likewise, within peoples' personal lives, inner questions and experiences well up from invisible depths of the soul, sometimes with shattering intensity. So often we cannot share them with each other because we lack an accepted science of the soul which is really able to recognise what is happening. All of the symptoms of a world-wide change, which is generally neither understood nor even acknowledged. They are the birth-pangs of a new stage of human development.

We find then, when we look at the totality of what the outer world is requiring of us, that the traditional foundation for our educational assumptions is in question. We come to the painful realisation that cleverness - and ability to pass exams - is no longer enough as an indicator of educational worth.

After all, there has never been a time when we have had such a capacity for cleverness and such a fund of information at our fingertips and yet we are faced with the fact that this has not helped us either to understand each other better or find meaning in our lives. Academic achievement is of very great importance, but it is not enough. Out of balance, it is actually destructive. It must be complemented by other human faculties (such as moral responsibility, social

sensitivity, courage, discernment and ultimately love) which are far more difficult to educate.

Most of all we are called upon, as modern people, to develop a new capacity of thinking which is at the same time moral and practical, creative and logical, reliable and yet open to higher inspiration. For this to become possible in future generations we must first substantially broaden and deepen our concept of what education is. We have to learn to educate the whole human being. This is the task which people involved in Rudolf Steiner education have been pioneering in schools throughout the world for most of this century. It is a continuing endeavour and one which more and more is being recognised in its true validity today.

What does it mean to educate the whole child? We can find clues by looking inward into the human being and the growing child.

Preschool and Kindergarten

Little children are much closer to the spiritual world than we are as adults. They are bathed in it, illumined by it. Wordsworth used the words:

***Not in entire forgetfulness
and not in utter nakedness,
but trailing clouds of glory do we
come from God who is our home.***

This aura of Grace which hovers over a young child and the warmth of innocence which surrounds it are gradually shed as the child grows. So it has to be, for childhood development is a bumpy road toward consciousness and becoming conscious means standing alone, separate, free..... but all in good time. Accelerating the process can only be destructive.

As adults we naturally distinguish clearly between ourselves and the outside world. We see the two as being quite separate.

For the pre-school kindergarten child there is as yet very little consciousness of self as something distinct and different. Certainly there are needs and there are squabbles, because such-and-such a thing is 'mine' and 'not yours'. The point is, though that there is no capacity for standing back and assessing, no possibility of unbiased judgment. Everything and everyone in the whole environment of the young child is experienced as part and parcel of the child:

likewise he or she identifies with everything else.

David Malouf, a contemporary Australian novelist, describes this state of mind with remarkable vividness in his *An Imaginary Life*. He narrates how for a young child the sentence 'it is raining' means nothing. For the child the actual experience is 'I am raining', 'I am thundering' in a state of total participation.

This 'participatory' consciousness is in many respects akin to earlier stages of consciousness of mankind as a whole. In both situations the world and all it contains is experienced as something living, dynamic, deeply absorbing and as a continuing source of wonder. We can say that little children almost literally drink the world into themselves, they take it in deeply, into the rhythms and organic forms of their bodies. They are sense organs through and through, open to everything - even the effects of our thoughts and feelings - and out of deep trust and a pulsing urge to learn, they imitate what they experience.

In recognising this, we find the key to teaching in the preschool and kindergarten. If children learn naturally through imitating, through actual doing, then we teach best by doing things with them which are worthy of being copied. This requires first of all an environment which is wholesome and secondly a very high degree of self-examination by the teacher. There needs to be most of all an atmosphere of goodness and happiness. The cares and issues of the outside world have no place in a kindergarten - they bring fear and they alienate the young child from their still delicate grip on life.

So much is there to be learnt at this age, which is often completely overlooked. Simple household actions like sweeping the floor, cleaning shoes, cooking, washing, scrubbing and so forth need to be done properly, again and again, in a rhythmical and whole-hearted way. Through this the child learns to do things thoroughly and be purposeful in all things, no matter how trivial.

Likewise, children of this age long to dance, lightly, gaily, rhythmically. They learn to sing out of the same mood and they learn to listen - to the incredibly soft sounds of a lyre, to the daily story, to the sound of the broom sweeping the floor. Painting and many other arts and crafts can be begun now, but never heavily or systematically.

Children learn far more than we realise through doing very simple actions.

They also learn incredibly much through their play. This play, with the imagination which accompanies it, is a preparation for our work capacities later in life. In play a child is totally concentrated and committed, absolutely whole-hearted in what he or she does. It is an enormously creative activity. It needs to be respected and tactfully watched over by the teacher. Likewise there are times when the play needs to be organised - as in the ring-games which accompany fairy tales and which do so much to prepare for social openness later in life.

One could say, in a word, that young children bring a mood of religious devotion into life. Their natural disposition of wonder can be a source of all learning right into adulthood.

Where wonder is lacking, learning becomes a duty and no longer a path of discovery. When wonder works still within us, as adults, we have each of us, the potential of finding meaning in all that life brings us. We can learn to accept and be grateful. Here, coming out of earliest childhood, is already a bridge from the 'ordinary' physical world to the spirit which is active behind the surface of all creation.

Such things are real foundations for life. They are of far greater importance than teaching children to read and spell and do mathematics during the first seven years. All of this can come later. Certainly these skills can be learnt by children of that age - by some, very easily; but the question that we so often don't even think of asking is: What is achieved and what is actually lost in the long term through this happening?

We do not understand the world with our heads alone. It is with our whole being that we relate to reality - and one aspect of this 'whole being' is what we could call 'intuitive' understanding.

Many people, despite all that works against it, have a 'sense' for nature, a 'sense' for what another person is really expressing (even though the words might be quite different) a 'sense' for the significance of a particular event (a meeting with someone, for example).

This 'intuitive' sensing of the world can certainly be unreliable; it must be balanced by the rational thinking that belongs to the

head. Nevertheless, without it our head thinking is often superficial and cold; it cannot grasp the full reality.

A good doctor is one who combines 'intuition' of what a patient is suffering with precise examination based on the skills and knowledge learnt during training. Likewise, the acquired techniques of a counselor need to be complemented by a deeper empathy with the other person's life situation if a healthy diagnosis is to be found. Detectives work on 'hunches', teachers and parents rely on the ability to experience the world through a child's consciousness, etc. All of this has connection with the natural (but easily suffocated) 'participatory' consciousness we had as young children.

What does this have to do with reading or not reading in the kindergarten? Just this: that through the process of reading the child's direct participation in the wholeness of the world is reduced - and in many cases actually lost. Reading a book is pronouncedly a brain activity - it involves an extremely strong inner effort of focusing (the brain, the eyes) and of actually cutting oneself off from what is all around. The outer world becomes once-removed - a veil of letters and increasingly fixed concepts intervenes and this can bring about the tendency (and one which is indeed very hard to reverse) of estranging a person right through life from real inner participation in the outer world. In a subtle way, the will to be involved in life can be damaged. If this is the case with reading, how much more does it happen through television and all the other electronic devices into which little children get so easily sucked today!

In the last few years a number of books by independent psychologists have been published in the USA on the subject of early learning. Some of them - *The Hurried Child* by David Elkind, for example - have become best sellers over there, though they are hardly known in Australia. In them the authors give eloquent testimony, out of their professional experience, to the damage that can be caused through early intellectual learning.

Actually, very many children today respond to these dangers - quite unconsciously - through the mysterious learning difficulty called 'dyslexia'. The effect of this disability, which can sometimes disappear naturally as the child grows older (if it is treated with due respect), is to screen off the child from the so-called 'real' world. Such children very often have qualities of imagination and

spontaneity quite lacking in children whose eyes have been opened to the outside world earlier in life.

It is these subtle elements of human nature which suffer so much in our pressured times - and it is these which are so absolutely needed if we are to find our way through the crises that come both in our individual lives and in the outer events of the modern world.

A good child-experience in kindergarten is actually a gift for life. Its real fruits may not reveal themselves until one is 40 years old or more. For the point is this: the children feed on what lives in their child realm, no less truly than the foetus feeds from the mother's womb. They need it through and through. And what they receive out of it, as gifts from the spiritual world is substance, actual spiritual substance, which they will be able to use and work on and transform throughout their whole lives.

Rudolf Steiner gives the example of how a little child's ability to pray can become transformed naturally in old age into the capacity to bless. What an inspiring realisation this is! We sense through it how all that is of 'heaven' in little children has the possibility of growing and disappearing and flowering again in quite a new form through our years of life. How different and how incredibly important does education appear when we look at it in this way!

Primary School

We can apply a similar thinking to our tasks in primary school, for as with the pre-schools, we are dealing not only with the immediate capacities and potential of the growing children but with the realisation that these can be transformed into higher, more conscious human faculties later in life. Here again, we only find clues when we observe children in quite a delicate way. For in the primary school we are dealing with children who are actually in a different world again from either the pre-school child or the adolescent. It is not just that they have grown taller and stronger and more capable than their younger brothers and sisters. Something else has begun to develop in the 7 and 8 year old which is not there in a child of 5 - and this 'something' has to do with the delicate separating off of an inner life from what takes place outside.

A kindergarten child is still completely at the mercy of what happens in its environment and in its own body. Its moods come and go like clouds across the sky - everything

depends on what adults and the outer world bring into the little child's experience.

With the primary school child, this is still of fundamental importance, but now the 'food' they want from outside is also such as can nourish the soul. Whereas kindergarten children learn of the world through doing, we can sense the primary school children 'feel' their way into reality. Daily encounters with the outer world are now, as it were, inwardly tasted, dwelt on, mulled over. They are inwardly 'felt' in an increasingly individual way.

I remember quite clearly that I 'judged' my own teachers at that age strongly through how they smelt or gazed or walked or spoke. In the presence of some I glowed; with others I felt insignificant and small. Even their way of dressing brought in me a feeling of warmth towards them or coolness.

These are very subtle things. They are not truly conscious - and yet through these senses children 'see' into us quite directly, far better than most of us are able to do as adults. For children relate much more from the heart than the head. And there we have it, it is in the heart that the world is received and 'judged' and responded to in children of those years. This is the key for teaching.

Children of that age learn from us most readily if they recognise that we ourselves speak from the heart, that we love what we are teaching and that we understand each individual child in the class. It is what the heart 'knows' that they want to know. It is what the teacher is, as a full human being, that they long to respect.

Our challenge is to present our material in such a way that the feeling-life of the child is touched and educated in a full and healthy way. For this inner feeling needs guidance no less than does the thinking and the physical activity of children.

This does not mean being sentimental or 'wishy-washy'. It means being human in the highest sense and being artistic. For Art is a real discipline and it is also tremendously invigorating. The world and all that it contains, right up to the human being, is as much a work of art as a feat of engineering. This urgently needs to be recognised and experienced in our materialistic times.

Through Art, in its many forms, profound truth can be brought to children (as indeed,

to adults). We need only think of the wealth of story content that comes to us out of the cultural part to realise that this is so. In the fairy tales, myths and legends of the world, in the mighty stories of the Bible, in the biographies of human being through the ages, we have an almost limitless source of wisdom and art. And the way in which these stories need to be told and worked with is itself an art.

We can actually say that everything that needs to be taught in primary school - reading, writing, mathematics, history, geography, languages, crafts, the arts themselves, even physical education - can be brought in a way which is artistic and this means that is both alive and precise.

It is not easy; in fact it is incredibly difficult and we often fall short - but therein lies one of our great challenges of today. Teaching has to become more than just a job or a technique. It needs to be actually a science, a vocation and an art.

I cannot overemphasise the importance of this in a world which has too much confined itself to utilitarian and materialistic concepts. We may even say that the future of our culture depends on it.

And the fruits of such striving - despite all our inadequacies - are very wonderful. For in the inwardly-mobile heart of a young child we have a foundation for what, much later in life, can become a capacity to understand other human beings.

In it, too, is a foundation for a living morality. For morality is not just of the heart, nor can it be taught simply through instructions and rules (though these naturally have a part to play). Morality needs to develop from within as something intimately connected with the innermost life of each human being.

Only then can there be the inner strength to find what is good and beautiful and true in any situation which life brings. Here is a well-spring of inspiration.

This takes a life-time to develop - and even that is insufficient. But the foundation is laid for it in all that the heart perceives and feels and experiences, in joy and in sadness, through the years of childhood.

High School

As children grow up through the primary school years, there come, more and more often, moments of a more awake

consciousness which finally explodes into birth at the tempestuous time we call 'puberty'. Behind the physical and emotional upheavals, what is happening inwardly is that the capacity for independent head-thinking is merging out of the primary school child's comparatively dreamy, 'feeling-thinking' of the heart.

The human intellect is something of enormous power, as is clear from the extraordinary scientific and technological progress that has taken place over the past few centuries. Its characteristic to observe, analyse, classify, hypothesise and to compute. It is, as such, a faculty of great importance to man today, but it has no connection with morality. It is neither moral nor immoral - it can be used equally for good or for bad. Left to itself it does its work without pity or feeling. It is also unable to accept the reality of anything which cannot be comprehended by its terms of reference. Just as the sun with its brightness blinds us to the continuing presence of the stars during the day, so does the intellect occlude from us the more subtle and less conscious aspect of our soul-lives.

It is for all these reasons that, in an education which works with the whole child, it is fundamental to withhold the premature awakening of purely intellectual faculties. It also underlies the importance of giving children a real trust in the power of goodness and of beauty in kindergarten and primary school.

Such a curriculum stands on the ground of a firm trust in the natural process of development working in children. As teachers we must have respect for the child's own deep-seated impulse toward growth and maturity. The experience of Rudolf Steiner schools over the past 60 years has given abundant testimony to the fact that if the intellectual faculties of children are allowed to develop in an organic way, at a pace which is in harmony with their physical and emotional growth, then the event of puberty manifests not as a chaotic upheaval but as a truly marvelous, budding process.

For the thinking which emerges at this time is like a flower of childhood development. It must be treated with continuing sensitivity. It needs to be schooled in very many areas, but never in such a way as to become rigid, sour or cold. It must become mobile and clear and light-filled - learning to rejoice equally in a musical composition, a

mathematical formula, a poem, a play, a bush walk, a meeting, a scientific discovery.

The 'scientist' emerging through the disciplines incumbent in high school physics, or chemistry or biology, must be no less a poet, a musician, artist, a craftsman, a person of the world.

For this to be, the faculty of thinking has to be recognised for what it truly is - a spiritual faculty, an immediate manifestation of the spirit and the human being.

Whether it is chained to materialism or whether it has the capacity later in life to bring new creative thoughts into our world situation depends very much on what it meets and how it is treated in these sensitive years of adolescence.

For this same faculty of thinking, purified and strengthened through inner work, can become an organ through which, as adults, we become sensitive to true thinking: we wake up as human beings, we become conscious vessels for the creative thoughts and impulses of the divine-spiritual world.

In the reverential 'doing' of little children, in the artistic 'feeling' of primary school children, in the light related 'thinking' of the high school, we have pure elements of three great streams of human endeavour - Religion, Art and Science.

Today, in outer life, the three are split up. There is almost no common ground between them. Not so long ago they flowed as one. A Greek temple was a place of religion, a supreme work of art and a demonstration of the highest scientific achievement for those times. Likewise, with the great cathedrals of Europe. For the 'giants' of the Renaissance - Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael and others - science was the healthy inquiry into the divine miracle of our existence and art a means of exploring and revealing this miracle in a way that could touch the human heart. Art was no less an exploration of Truth than was science or religion. Ever since those times there have been individuals who have achieved a similar synthesis, including, in our own century, amongst many others, Einstein, Jung and Rudolf Steiner himself.

If we are to find solutions to the great human issues of our times, then we will need all our faculties as human beings. We must find again the unity, within ourselves,

which we have had to sacrifice. It is not a question of going back, but of finding a new synthesis, appropriate to our modern consciousness.

Without our wholeness as human being - in head, heart and hands - our science will rigidify ever more into a technology which controls and ultimately stifles. Our thinking will be bound to materialism and our heart forces will wither. In all that we do, whether with our brain or hands, we will be inferior to the machines which we've created. It is not hard to see how this is happening already.

Only through experiencing again and again our essential humanness, through our acceptance of the Divine working in us and in the world around us, through all that we are and become as free individuals in the highest sense, will we find the strength, the creativity and the love to use our knowledge and our power in a moral way, in the service of the real needs of our times.

Toward preparing for this must our whole educational impulse be turned. We do so by taking as our starting point what the child is at each stage of development and what we are as human beings, and working from this toward the needs and challenges of our modern world. This child-centred approach is neither arbitrary nor dilatory. It is something which requires of us as adults the highest faculties of which we are capable.

It is this which is being worked on and struggled toward in what are now more than 800 Rudolf Steiner schools worldwide. And it has been enormously strengthening and inspiring to witness some of the very different circumstances in which this education has taken root, again and again, in so many different countries and continents of the world.

OTHER RECOMMENDED READING

A number of these books are available to be read in the School Library at school. The books may also be purchased from:

Rudolfsteiner.com.au
74 Mostyn Street
Castlemaine 3450
Tel: 03 5472 5316

The Steiner Store
87 Willesmere Road
Kew 3101
Tel: 03 9855 0066
www.steinerstore.com.au
E-mail: office@steinerstore.com.au

You Are Your Child's First Teacher
by Rabina Baldwin,
Celestial Arts, Berkley, California, 1989

Children's Illnesses
by Walter Holtzapfel
Mercury Press, 1996

Work and Play in Early Childhood
by Freya Jaffle
Floris Books, Edinburgh, 1996

Lifeways
by Gudrun Davey & Bons Voors
Hawthorn Press, UK, 1983

Understanding Children's Drawings
by Michaela Strauss
Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1978

Festivals with Children
by Brigitte Barz
Floris Books, Edinburgh, 1972

Festivals, Family & Food
by Diana Carey & Judy Harpe
Hawthorn Press, UK, 1982

Your Reincarnating Child
by Dr Gilbert Childs & Sylvia Childs
Sophia Books, Rudolf Steiner Press,
London, 1995

Phases of Childhood
by Bernard Lievegoed
Floris Books, Edinburgh, 1987

*Waldorf Education – Rudolf Steiner's ideas
in practice*
by Christopher Clouder & Martyn Rawson
Floris, 1998

*Four Arguments for the Elimination of
Television*
by Martin Large
Lape for the TV Action Group, UK, 1980

A Guide to Child Health
by M Glocker & W Goebel
Floris Books, Edinburgh, 1990

The First Three Years of the Child
by Karl Konig
Anthroposophic Press, NY, 1969

*The Care and Development of the Human
Senses*
by Willi Aeppli
Steiner Schools Fellowship, Sussex, 1993

Waldorf Education - A Family Guide
edited by Ruth Pusch
Mercury Press, Spring Valley, NY 1993

Painting with Children
by Brunhild Mueller
Floris Books, Edinburgh, 1987

Incarnating Child
by Joan Salter
Hawthorn Press, UK

School as a Journey
Torin Finser, Rudolf Steiner Press

Gardening with Young Children
by Beatrys Lockie
Hawthorn Press, UK

The Castlemaine Steiner School and
Kindergarten Parent Handbook

Produced May 2007 ©

All information current at that time.

Acknowledgement to Michael de Wolfe for
graphics and layout.

Castlemaine Steiner School
and Kindergarten.

Phone: (03) 5470 6235

Fax: (03) 5470 6237

Email:

enquiries@castlemainesteinerschool.com.au