PORT MACQUARIE
Steiner School

Parent Handbook for Kindergarten

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Port Macquarie Steiner School
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Welcome

We welcome you and your family to our school community. This handbook has been developed to help you to further understand and support your child's learning and development in this important phase of childhood. In addition to the essential information, you will need on practical matters, also outlined below are some of the principles behind the education we offer which make Steiner education a unique choice of schooling for your family.

Port Macquarie Steiner School is a member of Steiner Education Australia and the NSW Association of Independent Schools. Our school holds NESA registration to offer classes from kindergarten to class 6. As a Steiner school, we are part of an international movement in education (sometimes referred to as Waldorf Education) based on the work of Rudolf Steiner, joining the many other independent Steiner schools across Australia and worldwide.

It is our aim to instil a love of learning and encourage them to take an active role in their education. We nourish the children in our school and enrich our community through Steiner education in a way that is relevant and meaningful in today's world.

Steiner Early Childhood Education

Port Macquarie Steiner School is dedicated to the wellbeing and complete learning experience of each student. The healthy development of the whole person is fostered through a deep understanding of child development. Early childhood is seen as the developmental period of the 0-7 year old.

In the Kindergarten program there is an emphasis on the young child's social-emotional and physical development, in preparation for their more academic years ahead. Learning is integrated in repetitious work and care of a domestic classroom environment. The children help to prepare meals that they eat together each day, as well as allowing for uninterrupted creative play, creative experiences and regular walks in nature.

We value the gentle unfolding, understanding and uniqueness of each young child before us, in an unhurried and artistic way.

Principles of Steiner Early Childhood Education – Rhythm, Repetition and Reverence

Just as the sun rises and sets each day, the children live into very strong routines or rhythms, created and held by the kindergarten teacher and assistants.

This repeated rhythm provides an essential framework of security and knowingness for the children, without needing to have to question or concern themselves about how each day will unfold. They become active helpers, because they are part of setting up and tidying away and caring for each part of the day. The teachers models reverence for each part of the daily rhythm.

Within this daily rhythm the children work from a place of knowing, and require minimal verbal instruction, which helps to create a calm classroom environment and fosters confidence in their contributions to the classroom and class community.

Most importantly, this daily rhythm has a natural breathing quality to it, and the children are never rushed. Periods of concentration are followed by activities which allow the group to breathe out and loosen this focus.

The kindergarten year works rhythmically through the seasons, and each season brings its own unique qualities that we explore thorough songs, verse, stories and creative activities. Memory is strengthened and the child's sense of wholeness is worked upon, as they are strengthened to hear stories and songs repeated. They gain a sense of assurance and a deepening connection to their work.

Rhythm is essential in helping to develop a sense of balance, harmony, and well-being.

Arrival, Departure and Road Safety

Morning drop off
The school gate is unlocked at 8:30am. Students in Kindergarten should be brought inside into the school grounds by a parent or carer. Staff are on duty in the playground from 8:30am.

Afternoon pick up
Classes finish at 3:00pm however children can be picked up from 2:45pm from the Kindergarten classroom.

Arriving Late or Leaving Early
Students arriving at school late or leaving early must be signed in or out at the Office, by a parent or caregiver. This is in place to enable the School to fulfill a legal duty of care. If a student arrives late to School and the roll has been marked, they will be registered as absent for that day unless they have signed in at the Office.

Road Safety
Although we are a small school, there are a number of things we can all do to keep children safe around the roads. We have a staff member on and outside the school gate to help monitor the movement of children at the end of the school day.

From a parent perspective, there are a number of things you can do to help children remain safe around the roads. These are:

- Stick to the 40km/h speed limit in the school zone and look out for children who may be about.
- Always give way to pedestrians particularly when entering and leaving driveways.
- Always park and turn legally around schools. Maneuvers such as U-turns and three-point turns are dangerous during busy school drop-off and pick-up times.
- Drop your children off and pick them up on the school side of the road. Never call out to them from across the road – they may run to you without checking for traffic.
- It's safest for children to get out of the car through the Safety Door, away from passing traffic. This is the rear footpath side door of the car.
- As pedestrians, children can be easily distracted and are often too small to be seen by drivers. They may be unable to predict or identify dangers and tend to act impulsively. Talk with your child about safe behaviour on the footpath – it's not a safe place to play as it is near the road and vehicles may be entering or exiting driveways.
- Until your child is at least eight years old, hold their hand when on the footpath, in the car park and when crossing the road.
- Up until at least 10 years old, supervise your child very closely, holding their hand when crossing the road.
- If you can't be with your child, organise for another trusted adult to accompany them.
- After school, we request that if you have a child 10 years or younger that you meet them in the school or at the school gate. At the end of the school day children may be excited, distracted or tired and often not concentrating on their own safety

Attendance or Absences

If your child is be absent from school for any reason, including arriving late or leaving early, you must notify the School by phone or text to 0475 083 956 or email admin@portmacquariesteinerschool.nsw.edu.au. Please remember to include the reason for the absence.

Extended Absences due to Travel

Legislation requires that parents make a formal Application for Extended Leave – Travel if their child will be away from school for an extended period due to family travel during school time. This permission can only be granted by the Head of School and cannot be granted retrospectively. Parents must apply the month before the planned trip. If granted, the School will issue the family with a Certificate of Approval.

Guidelines for Visiting the School

Visitors to the school are always welcome and are asked to observe the following:

- All visitors to the School must sign in at the Office.
- Parents/carers who need to visit class areas during school hours must sign in at the Office, apart from those who are delivering students to their classrooms or picking them up outside school class time.
- If you are collecting your child after school, please wait until after class time before going to their classroom.
- If your child arrives late, or you need to pick them up early, please go to the Office first to sign them in/out.

Term Dates

Term dates are published on the website https://portmacquariesteinerschool.nsw.edu.au/
Please note we have curriculum days throughout the year which are student free days. These are also published on our website and in our school newsletters.

Communication

For general school information, please contact the office on 0475 083 956 or admin@portmacquariesteinerschool.nsw.edu.au

For enquires about your child's progress or development at school your child's teacher is your first point of contact.

A fruitful discussion requires a proper time and place, and the teacher's full concentration for individual attention.

- For a minor matter - speak to your child's teacher before or after school
- For anything requiring more than 5 minutes, please **arrange a time** to meet with your child's teacher either by:
    - asking them after school for a meeting time

- sending them an email requesting a time to meet
- arranging a meeting time through the office

If you need to discuss school fees or payments or facilities, please contact our Business Manager. At melodie@portmacquariesteinerschool.nsw.edu.au Meetings with our Business Manager can be arranged through the office.

If you need to take a particular issue further or have other educational questions, please contact our Head of School. Meetings with our Head of School can be arranged through the office.

Clothing and Dress Code

While we don't have a school uniform, we do have a dress code to ensure tidiness, safety and cleanliness. Children should wear:

Clothing
Suitable for maximum sun protection (no singlet tops, exposed midriffs etc)

- Neat, weather appropriate, comfortable clothing at all times, suitable for free and easy movement.
- Plain coloured clothes without commercial logos
- Black clothing is not acceptable before Class 6
- A waterproof jacket should be kept in school bag at all times for drizzling and rainy days. Children without waterproof jackets will be limited to undercover areas

Footwear

- Sturdy, supportive shoes, boots or sandals for outside. These may be removed for play in the sandpits, to climb trees and on the grassed areas only
- Slippers for inside classrooms in colder months are optional

Hats

- Wide-brimmed hats are required. School hats can be purchased from the office
- Children without hats will be limited to undercover areas.

Accessories

- Necklaces are discouraged for children's safety.
- Studs or sleeper earrings are ok however long earrings or not acceptable due to safety reasons.

Lunchboxes

In Kindergarten, morning tea is provided however lunch is brought to school each day. We strongly encourage nude lunchboxes with as little packaged food as possible. Lollies, chocolate and chips must not be brought to school.

If your child has particular dietary preferences for packaged food or food that is generally not encouraged at our school, please discuss this with your child's teacher.

Working with Imitation and the Will

In the very early, formative years the young child grows upright. In infancy their heads are proportionally large, and they grow down into their body and limbs, eventually developing a sense of uprightness in standing and walking. Rudolf Steiner expressed how in the early years, up until the age of seven, the young child is still developing their organs and physical body, their sense of balance, coordination, and gross motor capacities. Furthermore, he observed that the young child learns through imitating the world and the role models around them.

This way that young children imitate the world around them, calls on us as parents, teachers, and community to be positive role models for our children. Everything they see and sense, they do so whole-bodily. It lives deeply within them and becomes part of their own being, as they unfold.

The Kindergarten environment allows for this healthy experience of being able to imitate and work willingly in the room and in the garden. The teacher models healthy work, such as winding wool, or kneading bread, which the children imitate.

Formal instruction is replaced by imaginative pictures, such as when learning to finger knit, a song is sung that the children can follow by seeing the process.

The children are active in practical and creative ways, developing skills, strength, and coordination along the way. They help in preparing the morning tea: chopping, peeling, grating, kneading, cooking, milling, oat-rolling, serving, washing up and drying. They become independent learners in this work. They wipe, polish, sweep, rake, dig and care for their environment. There are many opportunities for children to work with important movements required to develop laterality, dominance, gross and fine motor skills, and opportunities to cross vertical and horizontal midlines. This also helps the foundation senses of balance, life, touch and movement to form.
In addition to the relationship with their kindergarten teacher and their immediate environment and sense-world, the kindergarten child begins to learn how to *be* in a class of children. They develop skills required for self-regulation, learning to be part of a group, to sit and listen, and rest when appropriate.

Care in the Kindergarten

The young child naturally has a complete sense of trust and openness to the world, and the art of the Kindergarten teacher is to allow for the young child to experience that the world is good.

Natural products, whole foods, and warm colours and smells provide a sense of a loving and cared for environment, and the children live into this experience. It is wholesome and nurturing and allows the child to be free in their daily play, work and choices, which are governed by this sense of orderliness, care and rhythm.

The consciousness of the young child can be dreamy, imaginative and is closely connected to the world around them they are coming to know. The unhurried environment of the kindergarten helps the child to explore their relationship to the world and its natural or real substances.

We encourage families to support their children at home to provide an environment that is equally rhythmical and unhurried, and where the young child is supported to engage at home as an active helper.

Morning Circle

The children come together with the teacher in Circle each day, where the teacher leads them in a rhythmical sequence of songs, movement, verses, imaginations, finger plays, and traditional ring games, usually based on the seasons, and repeated daily for three weeks. The children come to learn these by heart.

The children all contribute and no child is individualised to perform on their own. Rich imaginations of strong archetypes of the world around us are brought; the woodcutter cutting the wood, the cobbler mending the shoes, the pitter patter of rain drops, and the snail curled up in his shell house. The children enjoy living into these imaginations. They imitate the teacher's gestures and movements, and experience joy in song, movement and the richness of language. The children have opportunities to move their body with more control and consideration.

Morning Tea

Each morning in the Kindergarten, the children help to prepare Morning Tea. The children eat regular wholesome meals and learn to help participate in making the meal. They participate in measuring, milling, grating, chopping, peeling, washing, setting the table, pouring jugs of water or pots or warm herbal tea.

When the garden is ready, the children are able to go into the garden to pick fresh herbs for teas, vegetables for soup day. They delight in the connection of being able to harvest fresh food from the veggie patch that they have cared for and worked in over the months.

There is reverence at the meal table. A meal time candle is lit and a blessing of gratitude is said. We bring our best manners to the table, and the golden helpers take turns in serving their class mates.

The children learn to try new foods, and also to appropriately share conversation at the table, listening to others, and sometimes eating in quiet, to really enjoy and notice the different tastes of the food they are eating.

The Importance of Play

Creative Play is central to the Kindergarten. Play is a child's work. The play at age five turning six has developed and become more sophisticated than the children's play of the younger years.

Here in their play, the children are seeing the world around them more clearly, as their thinking begins to start linking ideas, they often spend more time planning their play, than playing. They remember their play from the previous day, and often want to recreate this play again. It is their therapy as they digest the world that they are coming to know.

They create family groups, they engineer, build, and design things, they negotiate and direct, and tell wonderful puppet plays to a willing audience. They make and sell tickets or create birthday celebrations in their play, wrap presents, play the doctor, the patient, the hero as they save the world from a fire or some other emergency. They become the big sister, the mother, or the baby.

The Kindergarten supports the children's play by providing ample, unstructured time each day for play. The room is filled with carefully chosen natural and simple unformed items that the children are able to use in their play.

The children are able to develop their imagination through free play both inside and outside. They work together to create stories, make cubby homes, and collaborate, communicate, measure and confer. Their social-emotional development is supported by the teacher's practiced observation skills.

Play in early childhood is necessary, and contemporary research links the importance of play to a child's social, emotional and cognitive development, as well as having the benefit of helping a child to develop resilience, creativity, confidence and happiness.

Tidy Up Time and Working Together

The children work together to restore order and cleanliness to the classroom, or outdoors. This is an important part of the responsibility that the children are expected to help with. In doing this, they work creatively to deliver an item across the room, or they may ask to be a cart or a horse and balance it on their back as they make their way to where the item belongs. Sometimes we may play eye spy and try to find things in the room that no one else has been able to see.

The children come to learn that they need to cooperate as many hands make light work. Six year olds need to be involved with the fabric of home-life. Helping your child to cooperate with simple tasks at home also, will help them at school with the understanding that they are part of the family group, not being served upon. This helps to grow an understanding of the work, care and cooperation that happens together, and being responsible for their own play and care for their belongings.

Handcrafts and Seasonal Activities

Working with Steiner's threefold picture of Head, Heart and Hands, the children have an opportunity each day to work creatively with a particular artistic activity, such as watercolour painting, drawing, handcrafts or beeswax.

The teacher carefully chooses activities which help to develop particular skills and abilities in the young child, such as wool winding, finger-knitting, french-knitting and weaving. They are all considered to be important foundation fine motor, concentration and computational skills required for their more academic years.

They also create an important opportunity for the young child to experience working on a project that requires particular steps, sequences and a certain level of perseverance, which is vital to help the development of their will forces.

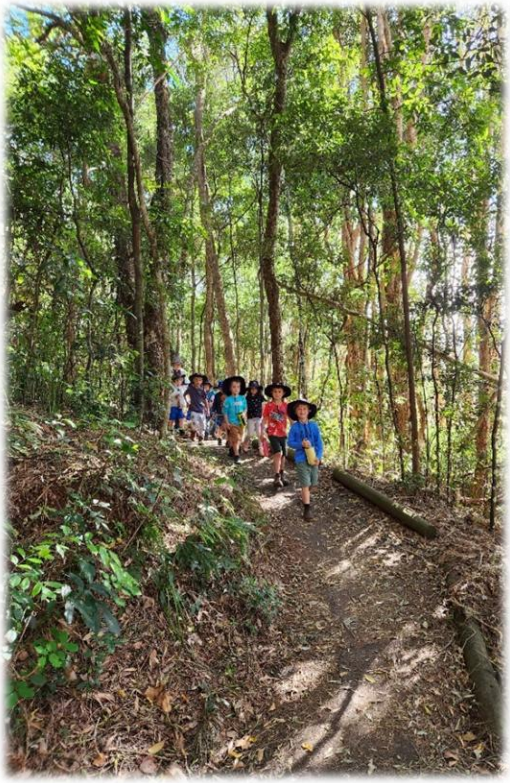
The young child now learns to master certain proprioception and self-movement skills. Alongside inside playtime, a child may choose to sit and work with the teacher on a seasonal activity, such as candle making, shelling walnuts or peas, or to further work on their own handcrafts that they have started.

At Steiner schools, the curriculum is strongly linked with the arts, so they develop personal relationships to their own work. The children engage deeply in these artistic experiences, which use high quality, natural materials. The children develop a sense of the value of their work.

The children learn to be resourceful in a consumerist's world, that calls on us to be practical and capable to create and work with our hands.

Bushwalking and Gardening

Connecting with nature is done not only with all of the materials we use but in breathing into the natural world through gardening and bushwalking.



The children grow strength in their limbs, with movement being important for the development of their speech. Through regular walks and gardening, we learn how to read our environment and its needs and changes throughout the seasons.

Storytime – Foundations for Literacy

The Steiner Kindergarten has a rich and varied oral literacy tradition. The teacher is a storyteller, a poet, and musician, a conduit of a rich history of classical fairy tales, nature stories, seasonal songs, poems and verses.

In Kindergarten, the teacher learns to tell the story from heart. The children learn to engage with and to be attentive listeners to long fairy tales. The same story is usually repeated over a few days. The language is rich and sophisticated, and it is not watered down just because they are young.

Occasionally, the children will act out a story, such as the 'Shoemaker and the Elves'. A specially prepared puppet story may be created and shared with the children throughout the year.

Sometimes stories are chosen as healing stories to help the children to move through a difficulty they may meet either individually or as a whole group.

Numeracy

Numeracy skills are developed in various age-appropriate and imaginative ways. Numeracy is embedded in our daily domestic experiences and activities in the classroom. Measuring and weighing in cooking, half-filling six painting jars, setting out spoons and cups for each child at the table, working with ratio, folding cloths in half and then in quarters. Learning occurs in the children's everyday experiences in very practical and hands-on ways.

Children also learn through finger plays and songs, addition, and subtraction algorithms, and most importantly how to share and divide. They learn repeating patterns, symmetry and spatial awareness through handcraft and play, and a beginning sense of time, through the seasonal activities that carry them through the school year.

Festivals

Festivals play an important part of the school calendar and a celebration of a seasonal or cultural event. These celebrations are an opportunity for parents and families to join in with what has been lovingly prepared for and anticipated.

Celebrating Birthdays in the Kindergarten

Birthdays are very special and an important part of our Kindergarten, honouring each child's life journey.

The children learn about their friends, their friends' family, origin and special things that have happened in their life. The class creates a special birthday card book, and the teacher makes a special gift for the child.

A healthy, simple birthday cake is made on the day. Each child makes a wish for the birthday child, who is wearing the special birthday cape and crown.

Media, Screens and Electronic Devices

We recommend the protection of young children from exposure to electronic media (even with content marketed as suitable for children) and the use of screens. Electronic media are considered by experts in Steiner education and healthy child development to significantly impact a child's developing faculties and behaviour.

As researchers are continually evaluating the impact of electronic devices on the development of the sensory and nervous systems of children, we consciously teach an 'unplugged' curriculum.

We introduce Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills to upper primary classes when students have already developed well-grounded skills in reading and writing.

This 'unplugged' experience is seen as crucial to the development of imagination, creativity, original thought and an 'uncluttered' self-image — a solid foundation for later application of creativity in the use of, and enthusiasm for, ICT in its many forms at an appropriate age.

While this is in the realm of home life, we respectfully ask you to refrain from exposing your children to the media, and to adult content. This will assist the students to better engage at school. For lower primary children, we encourage lots of free play time at home, engaging children in helping with simple tasks at meal time, spending time exploring and frequenting favourite places in nature reserves, at the beach, or even walks around the neighbourhood observing what is growing and changing in the gardens throughout the seasons.

Transition to Class 1

As Kindergarten progresses, the children are usually looking forward to, and being prepared for, their entry into Class 1. New and more challenging tasks are offered, and a greater degree of autonomy takes place. The children entering Class 1 have a wish to learn in a more conscious way, to learn from a teacher and be involved in more than play and activity - they really want to learn!

In English and Mathematics, informal play-based learning now gives way to structured lessons which are teacher directed. The rhythms of the class now begin to take on the more formal aspects of a timetable with lessons at particular times of the day. Children are engaged not only through the will but increasingly through the feelings which are activated through story and imagination.

Literacy skills emerge as a gradual externalisation and formalisation of internal pictures (imagination). Letters then phrases and sentences are brought through stories in which the actions and imagery engage the child's feeling life.

Mathematical skills or concepts are brought through stories in which the actions and images clearly provide an enlivened experience of the process. This way the skills can be practiced with repetition which is new each day in its context and which builds layers of increased complexity naturally. The children increasingly work through the capacity for inner picturing of number realities and relationships.

Outdoor nature experiences and simple stories are now joined by more detailed but still imaginative stories of the natural world around the child (Science) which are illustrated, and excerpts written in their books, laying the groundwork for studies in later grades of the world of animals, botany, geology, physics, and astronomy. In receiving these living pictures in a mood of wonder, the children engage with and remember it more strongly. This assists later when the intellect fully awakens, to supports the interaction of the analytical mind with a more timeless and imaginative but no less truthful experience and perception of the living world.

Towards the end of the kindergarten year, many changes can be seen. Teeth have been lost, children have grown taller, molar teeth are pushing through, the children are stronger. The children show signs of having grown out of their fleshy early childhood years, and are now ready for the journey ahead, as they transition to Class 1. The teacher will complete necessary Class One readiness observations of each child, and will meet with parents regarding their child's readiness for Class One.

Resources

Reading Suggestions

Free to Learn, Introducing Steiner Waldorf Education – Lynne Oldfield
You are Your Child's First Teacher – Rahima Baldwin
The Genius of Play – Sally Jenkinson
The Incarnating Child – Joan Salter
All Year Round – Ann Druitt
Festivals, Family and Food – Diana Carey and Judy Large
Last Child in the Woods – Richard Louv
Toxic Childhood – Sue Palmer
You're Not the Boss of Me – Understanding the Six/Seven Year Transition – Ruth Ker
Simplicity Parenting – Kim John Payne
Creative Discipline, Connected Family – Lou Harvey Zara
Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviours- Susan Perrow