



Early Childhood Handbook

An Introduction and Guide for Parents in Our
Preschool

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WELCOME

We warmly welcome you and your family to Noosa Pengari Steiner School.

The Preschool is a bridge between home and formal schooling working with the principles and philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. We strive to create an environment where the imagination, creativity and inner-will of your child will flourish.

Until the age of 6 – 7 children learn through imitation. With this in mind, the Preschool aims at creating a warm and loving homelike environment with rhythmic repetition where children feel secure.

Our Preschool day consists of a flow of physical, social and artistic activities. Children have the opportunity to enjoy domestic tasks such as, baking, washing and gardening. This participation enables the child to imitate purposeful adult work and be involved in real life activities.

We strive to provide an education that maintains the dream-like quality, deepening the child's innate sense of wonder, and developing an awareness of the world through play, which is the foundation of formal education. If they experience beauty, goodness and truth in their activities and surroundings they will grow with a sense of quality in all they do. Thank you for entrusting your child into our care.

So how can we build a healthy bridge between the Preschool and the home for the children? It is with this purpose in mind that the Preschool Handbook was created. Parents are invited to share their questions and concerns at parent evenings, in scheduled interviews and in conversations with their teachers. It is our hope that we can grow and learn together in a true spirit of community.

*"The preschool years, the kindergarten years are the most important
of all in the education of the child.*

*It is absolutely essential that before we begin to think, before we so much as begin to set our thinking
in motion, we experience the condition of wonder."*

Rudolf Steiner



ABOUT THE PRESCHOOL

Educational Philosophy

*"Receive the child in Reverence,
Educate him in love,
Let him go forth in freedom."*

Rudolf Steiner

Our teachers are inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner, which encourages teachers to assist their children to develop a life-long love of learning, a reverence for life and courage to live fully.

Our school endeavours to educate equally the areas of academia, artistic experience and practical skills (the head, heart and hands) in integrated ways. Through this balanced approach, students are helped to develop clarity of thought, a sensitivity of feeling and a constructive, disciplined will.

Teachers work creatively to generate not only a genuine inner enthusiasm for the world in each individual, but also a wonder-filled, creative mind. They also cultivate the child's moral life by teaching them respect for themselves and others. The social education of the children is enhanced through deepening their relationships with peers and teachers with whom (ideally) they work and grow for seven years developing an atmosphere of support, co-operation and commitment. A central part of the teacher's task is to intimately understand the needs of each child, and to nurture the development of a real spirit.

NPSS is co-educational, non-sectarian and non-denominational and allows all students, regardless of gender, race or religion, a broad educational experience.

Steiner Education has been recognised and respected in Europe as a highly effective form of education for over 90 years. At present, there are around 2000 Steiner schools, kindergartens, universities and institutes of higher learning established world-wide.

Our Mission: A special task to which one devotes one's life calling.

*"Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings
who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives."*

Rudolf Steiner

To acknowledge and nurture the threefold nature of the human being as body, soul and spirit and to strive to achieve balance by developing the child's thinking capacities, their feeling life and their will, out of which a true academic achievement will arise.

To provide an education based in Anthroposophy as given by Rudolf Steiner – inspired by knowledge of humankind and love of children.



Our Staff

Rose Room

Teacher: Rhiannon Sims – Bachelor of Education, Bachelor Arts, Certificate of Rudolf Steiner Education, Certificate 3 Early Childhood Education & Care, Steiner Education – Early Childhood Teaching Foundation

Assistant: Marcella Maioli – Diploma of Early Childhood Education & Care
Cathy Mallac - Certificate 3 Early Childhood Education & Care

Lavender Room

Teacher: Jo Williams - Bachelor of Education, Early Childhood

Assistant: Camilla Swan-Ward – Certificate 3 Early Childhood Education & Care
Eve Lennox – Certificate 3 Early Childhood Education & Care

Additional Staff

Georgie Gunthorpe: Diploma of Early Childhood Education & Care

Caz Hillier: Diploma Early Childhood Education & Care

Annie Schulz: Certificate 3 Early Childhood Education & Care



LIFE IN THE PRESCHOOL

"If a child has been able to play, to give up his whole living being to the world around him, he will be able to, in the serious tasks of later life, devote himself with confidence and power to the service of the world." Rudolf Steiner

Children are carried along by the rhythms of the world in which they live – from the rhythms of breathing in and out, to the daily rhythms of sleeping and waking. The yearly cycle of the seasons and the rhythmic procession of stars across the heavens are part of life experience for adults and children. Children flourish when their daily activities are arranged rhythmically to reflect the natural order of life.

Our preschool activities flow with a sense of "breathing in" to "breathing out", from the quiet moments of fairy tale and circle to the active moments of vigorous work and play. Typically, the children are involved in creative play for a substantial part of the morning. Transitions between the activities are graced with a song. Each day has its own special activity, e.g. Painting on Wednesday, baking on Thursday. This repetition allows a secure and nurturing atmosphere to develop for the child.

Just as children are carried along by the regular rhythms of the school day, so too are they nourished by regular rhythms at home. As difficult as it is in these modern times to establish set meal times and bedtimes, we strongly encourage you to do so. It is very important for young children to go to bed at the same time every night. We recommend that this be no later than 8pm to allow for plenty of sleep and a happy busy day to follow. Please feel free to contact your teacher if you would like some ideas for making this transition a successful one for parent and child.

The Role and Work of the Preschool Teacher

The task of the Preschool teacher is to provide an environment (physical, social, emotional), in which the young child feels secure, loved and recognised. This entails all the pedagogical methods and strategies mentioned herein, such as a programme based on play, imagination, rhythm, routine, repetition and imitation. Above all, the teacher strives to be a worthy role model for each child. We work to establish and maintain a relationship of mutual respect, understanding and co-operation between home and school, teacher and parent, for the benefit of the child.

To fulfil this role the preschool teacher undertakes personal development and a strengthening of their inner life, as well as professional development. In addition, there is a weekly faculty meeting, which includes study and ongoing attention to day-to-day matters. Teachers attend regional meetings of Waldorf early childhood educators for a weekend seminar twice each year and attend an 8-day national conference for Waldorf early childhood teachers every second year.

In keeping with the primary school calendar, the preschool has scheduled pupil-free days during the school year, which are announced in advance on the school calendar and in the Newsletter. These days are for teacher's professional development where topical issues can be explored and discussed, guest speakers may be invited or teachers may share ideas from conferences and seminars.

The Preschool teachers are also responsible for interviewing and welcoming new children and their families into the preschool. And so we welcome you and your family to our preschool. May we all continue to learn, grow and strive together to be all that we can be.



Imitation and the Will

All that the child has imitated becomes their own through self-initiated creative play. They do not reflect or conceptualise but take in the gesture and impulse and through their will express this in play. This immersion in life and ability to play bring embodied experience and learning at this age.

There are two forces in the child at work. The child brings the capacity to imitate and also their own inner impulses to engage with the world in a unique, creative and potent way. This connecting together of what is experienced or revealed to the child about the world on the one hand and on the other the awakening and strengthening of what are essential individual impulses and gifts characterises a healthy education.

Through play, children enter the activities of the adults around them. The best kind of activities for kindergarten children are therefore those that allow them to engage, on a child's level, in the work of adults. Children are offered the possibility of participating in the traditional activities that might take place in a home: cooking and baking, cleaning and washing, sewing and ironing, gardening and building. Because these activities are done rhythmically, they create a feeling of well-being and a sense of security in the child. As they work purposefully the child becomes grounded in the realities of life, thus, helping them enter more fully into life at a later age.

The materials and toys in a Waldorf kindergarten stimulate the children to use their powers of imagination and fantasy. As these capacities are developed, children are able to transform natural materials and their use. They can use pieces of wood that have been left in their natural shapes as tools, musical instruments, telephones, vehicles, tickets to a performance, food for a feast, or the gold and jewels of a buried treasure hidden by pirates.

If one observes children playing with toys that have a great deal of detail, one can see that there is a different quality to the play. If, for instance, children are given a toy yellow taxicab, they are likely to limit their play to activities involving a taxi. If, however, they are given a plain wooden car, the possibilities are endless, limited only by the children's imagination.

Research suggests that those who score highest in socio-dramatic play (which involves make believe, transformation of objects and verbal expression) also show greatest gains in later cognitive and creative capacity, intellectual competence, socio-emotional skills. Observers have recognised that play develops movement, creative, language, artistic and imaginative skills and expression. It is the free nature of self-directed play that fosters creativity.

Self-Directed Play

Self-directed play is characterized by:

- ❖ The absence of a purpose, theme or goal set by an adult
- ❖ Periods free of adult intervention and stimulation during play in order to give this play a certain direction
- ❖ The quality of timelessness in play
- ❖ The quality of attentiveness and devotion in the play actions of the child;
- ❖ The child being in the play and not distracted by other things going on in the environment.
- ❖ The child's inner identification is in the play action performed, so that imaginative situation or beings are played out as if real.
- ❖ The presence of flow in play: the child can move easily from one play situation to the next
- ❖ The presence of satisfaction in the child at the completion of the play.



Types of Play

Play changes with developmental stages and can broadly show the following steps which each require different play environments and materials.

- ❖ Around one year old the child plays alone near the carer, movement is central and play is concrete.
- ❖ Around two years old the child usually becomes involved in parallel play
- ❖ At three years old begins fantasy or make-believe play – objects seem in a constant state of transformation and children leave a trail of creative mess as every toy is used. Three and four year olds are connected through playmate play.
- ❖ Five year olds may have an idea and can plan their play and find objects they will need.
- ❖ Six year olds can play without props at times as they can see all the images in their minds eye.

Another way of reflecting on play recognises the following types of activity:

- ❖ Exploring and investigating
- ❖ Role play of social experiences
- ❖ Creating worlds- floor play
- ❖ Physical play, rough/tumble, skills
- ❖ Story play with props or puppets
- ❖ Healing play (of difficult experiences played out)

The Children's Environment

Children are provided with opportunities to experience and interact with the natural and humanly created world through self-directed play, outdoor exploration, nature festivals and authentic home and garden activities.



Indoor Spaces

Steiner Educators create indoor play spaces with warm and nurturing furnishings made from natural fibres and a richness of imaginative and aesthetic play materials such as cloths, shells, driftwood, bark, seed pods, crystals and stones, fibres and carved timbers to supplement more traditional toys for construction and role play. The rooms are furnished in warm and soothing colours to enfold the child. Cottons, silks, felted wool and natural timber furniture predominate. Furniture can be used for cubby building and play stands with pegs for cotton blankets also provide for materials for creating cosy homes.

Outdoor Spaces

Educators develop rich natural outdoor garden play spaces with plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud, water and animal life as well as other nature elements which foster joyful exploration, discovery and connection to life. Teachers encourage and plan for play with the elements, diverse weathers and connection to the sun, moon and stars. The rhythms of the world and the cosmos are experienced through outdoor activities and festivals. Timber and climbing frames as well as cloths allow children to imagine, create, and build diverse structures.

Water flow forms, pumps, troughs with buckets and wind vanes, and kites provide access to the elements of air and water.

The Role of Rhythms

For young children to be able to connect to the participatory consciousness that allows immersion in the life and gesture of the world and also allows them to be engaged in self-initiated imaginative play they need to be held in a secure rhythm and warm aesthetic environment without overstimulation. Rhythm brings reassurance and continuity as well as trust in the unfolding of life. A sense that here there is time to do things beautifully is cultivated in the Steiner Early Childhood Education.

Children's healthy habits are supported by repetition of authentic tasks and their memory is strengthened by recurring meaningful events such as festivals.

A daily rhythm would usually include:

Circle Time: music, speech and movement. Morning Circle is a daily time of imitated songs, poems, movement, action rhymes and finger plays. The repertoire has a seasonal mood and is carried by a cohesive theme with appropriate gestures, and music.

Indoor Self-directed Creative Play

At least one hour of undisturbed play indoors with simple aesthetic toys and materials capable of transformation- cloths, shells, wood offcuts, stones, play stands, furniture, blankets, human and animal figures, crowns, capes and ties.

Home Activities: Cooking, Bread Baking, Washing, Tidying, Polishing, Sweeping, Crafts, Woodwork

When adults are engaged in skilful and purposeful work the children have a sense of dedication to imitate. It does not matter so much whether they help directly in sweeping or washing up or use this in their play. In both cases they will be more content and focussed. When educators observe them directly, then children feel this and become more distracted and agitated. When educators become involved in meaningful work the play reflects this also.

The experience of traditional handcrafts takes children to times of old when the family made many of the furnishings, tools and clothes in their homes, when crafts were done by all around the fire at night and care was taken with the objects which represented many hours of labour. The love of colour, texture and form of their work nurtures their artistic sense.

The children develop a sense of care for each other's work and a feeling of community that will remain with them. They learn to appreciate the beauty and artistry of handmade goods and the empowerment that comes from being able to make one's own belongings. The development of community through shared activity forms a model of a sustainable and creative future.

Artistic Work: Painting, Beeswax Modelling, Drawing, Sculpting

The children freely imitate painting, modelling and drawing in a weekly rhythm. They are given natural colours and materials and these work in a healthy way on the child. In play too in and outside they can express themselves artistically as they make gardens, shell spirals and sand sculptures and story landscapes.

Outdoor Play in Nature, Bushwalk / Games

Each day the children experience the enlivening presence of nature and interact with the elements. Coats, gumboots and raincoats mean that every day is a wonderful day for outdoor play. Circle games and dances and bushwalks are wonderful outdoor activities.

Morning Tea and Lunch

A beautifully prepared table with flowers, napkins, cups and water jug are prepared and after a grace is sung the children eat a healthy meal, prepared on site with fresh meals rich in vegetables and grains.

Story, Puppetry and Role Play

In a Steiner Kindergarten language is developed in children through stories of the literary heritage of childhood told for several days, nourishing the memory forces. The traditional and classical stories as well as teacher created and modern ones are carefully memorised and told with focus on a well-modulated voice. The richness of the language helps extend vocabulary and the beauty and rhythm of the language develops the aesthetic sense.

The ability to find one's voice in later life is built upon experiences of potent language which is meaningful and connected to the world and humanity. Expressive qualities develop when beautiful speech is heard and imitated. Later subtle complexities of thought are facilitated by the rich and finely formed language structures of the teacher.

Rest

Children need a rest time in a quiet environment. The rest time is prepared through a regular rhythm of verses, preparation of beds and a candle-lit story. The soft music of the lyre and the teacher's singing help to quieten children. Sometimes the older children do not sleep and may get up sooner to be involved in quiet activity.

At the end of the day a farewell song brings the joyful activity to a close.

Support for All Children

Steiner Early Childhood Educators receive each child with reverence for their unique qualities of being and they work to both envision the child's highest capacities and unfoldment and to support any special needs of the child. Through their reflective practice they observe deeply, they communicate with families and facilitate connection to available medical support professionals and where appropriate a wide range of specialist therapists including e.g. behavioural optometrists, curative eurythmists (a form of creative movement) or extra lesson/ sensory integration specialists.



Television, Media and the Young Child

The presence of the television and other media in a child's life is often clearly seen in the Preschool. The strong influence it has upon little children is visible in many ways. The child may speak in the tone of a certain character or machine. The child may seem "stuck" in their ideas of play, unable to play anything but a super hero, Transformer or emergency. Other children seem to lose their imagination and can't "think" of anything to play. More subtle changes may be noted in a child who cannot sit still during a story, making it a distressing time instead of a time of wonderment and delight.

Television watching itself affects child development regardless of the program content. Recent research shows that television watching adversely affects children's thinking, speaking, imagination, senses, physique, feelings and behaviour.

There are many well-documented effects of television on children, for example hyperactivity and lack of attention span or inability to complete tasks. Perhaps the greatest cost is the dimming effect it has on the child's wonderful imagination. It is the imagination which provides the foundation for learning and growth. We fully recognise that TV is in the domain of the family and that it is up to you to decide for your child. We do ask though that NO television is watched in the morning before school and we feel that TV watched before bedtime is very disturbing to a child's sleep.

Children learn so much in their first seven years compared to the rest of their lives. They learn to walk, to speak, and experience the awakening of thinking as they grow from being babies to infants. Through play, children develop their knowledge of things, their relationships with other children, their physical control and their imagination. Playing is a child's work and channels energy constructively into the learning processes.

Children learn best through imitating other children and the adults around them. Before television there was a children's culture rich in games, songs and rhymes. Children could play longer, sustain interest more, play dramatically and were more active – according to experienced early childhood teachers. Television watching puts children into an untypical passive state in which they are deprived of their true work, which is their play.

We encourage you to explore alternatives to television. Examples may be found in any domestic work. Big favourites are cooking, washing dishes, yard work and gardening, carpentry or shoe polishing. The Preschool teachers would be happy to share ideas or suggest other alternatives.

What is true of television also holds for video/DVD and computer games and other media as well. Too many music and story tapes, if they are a substitute for the live human voice, can also be harmful. For more information about the effects of media on the developing child, see the recommended book list in the parent resources section.

We request that children under 7 refrain from watching television, videos/DVDs and cinema or playing computer/video games.



GENERAL PRESCHOOL INFORMATION

To fully enjoy our preschool program, your child will require the following items. Please read the handbook for reasons why these items are important for your child's play and learning environment.

Clothing

- ❖ Plain comfortable clothes as per dress code.
- ❖ Singlets, socks and layers of warm clothing for winter months.
- ❖ Hat – legionnaire or wide brimmed – to be left at school.
- ❖ Covered shoes with good grip for outside play.
- ❖ Spare clothes.
- ❖ Soft soled, slip-on plain indoor shoes – purchased by parents from the Treasure House in Term 1.

Meals

- ❖ Morning Tea – each day the children help create a shared morning tea for the class.
- ❖ Lunch – a healthy lunch will be prepared with children each day in Preschool.
- ❖ Children are to bring a vegetable each day to share. Teachers may request certain types of vegetables, depending on the menu.



Rest Times

A rest time is scheduled each day, after lunch, for approximately 30 minutes. Rest time in our programme is the moment in the day when the child can be given the opportunity to spend time by themselves. The room comes to a very quiet, calm mood, the curtains are drawn and everyone in the room prepares their mattresses. The teacher plays the lyre and makes sure each child is settled on his/her own bed.

It is not expected that the children sleep but they are encouraged to rest. It is “a time to be kind to themselves”. In our busy frantic lives and preschool is also a busy place, we believe it to be very important to help each child to learn to value and feel comfortable with being by themselves. It is vital that they learn to appreciate moments of quiet. It takes conscious effort to create these quiet moments for our children. We would like to encourage the parents of pre-prep children to also create a rest time for their child after lunch at home. It can be a very special moment to share with your child.

Each child will need a plain flat sheet (clearly named) for rest. Preschool will supply the bottom fitted sheet.

Preschool Times: Monday to Friday 8.30am – 2.55pm

Pre-prep for children turning 5 years old:

Five days per fortnight (2 days one week and 3 days the next), 8.30 am – 2.55 pm

Prep for children turning 6 years:

5 days per week 8.30 am to 2.55 pm

Arrival

The children’s school day begins at 8.30 am. The children do not need to be at school before this time. Please respect that prior to this is teacher preparation time.

An adult must accompany all children to the door. Please be punctual as it can be very disturbing for some children to arrive late and feel that everyone else has started without them.

Each class has a sign-in book that the adult bringing the child to preschool needs to complete in the morning and afternoon. The communication book should be used for informing the teachers if someone other than yourself is picking up your child.

Remember, we are creating a harmonious calm mood in the Preschool. Please assist us by entering in a quiet manner.



Settling In

The first week of school can be an anxious time for parent and child. We try to make this transition away from home as gentle and positive as possible. With this in mind we offer a few suggestions and comments that you may find useful.

Children like order and routine so try to establish your school routine as quickly as possible.

Give yourself plenty of time in the morning so your child does not feel rushed and unsettled.

- ❖ Say goodbye in a cheerful and loving way. Don't cling, however hard it may be. If you say "the last kiss", mean it.
- ❖ Please consider that your feelings, misgivings and guilt can interfere with your child's adjustment. Once you have made a careful decision about the School, stop worrying and show your child you are confident that s/he will have an enjoyable day and be happy.
- ❖ If there are problems, please speak to the teacher about this, preferably without the child being present.

Messages

Messages from the teacher are often sent home via email, the Parent Newsletter or a notice posted on the notice board. It is the responsibility of all car-pool drivers to pass on these messages.

Messages can be left at the school office on 5471 0199.

Be assured that we will phone you if we need to contact you in regards to your child's wellbeing. For this purpose, please ensure that the school office is kept informed of changes to your family's contact details.

Departure

Please come to the Pre School door and wait for your child to be dismissed. The Preschool programme ends at 2.55 pm. It is important that you collect your child on time. Children can become distressed when they have to wait for parents. Please sign children out every day. If there is a change of person for pick up, please inform the teacher or office prior to this.

If your child is in a car-pool, please provide teachers with a copy of the car-pool roster. Preschool children will not be dismissed into the care of other children or adults unless specific arrangement has been made with the teacher. It is the parents' responsibility to inform car-pool drivers of absences or extra riders in advance.

For your child's safety, teachers must be aware of anyone other than yourself who will be picking your child up during the year. If there is a change, teachers must be informed in writing. Our sign-in book is provided for you to record this information. Every preschool child needs to be signed out in the afternoon. It is preferable that older children and siblings come to the Pre School to wait for rides.

Reminder: Pre School finishes at 2.55 pm. Punctuality brings joy to children and teachers alike.

Art and Craft

Craft work often involves projects that require will and concentration. Completed items will be sent home at the end of each term. With the children's drawings and paintings the teacher always places emphasis on the doing, not the end product. To this end the children's artwork is collected by the teacher and kept in a portfolio. This portfolio is given to the children at the end of year celebration. These portfolios are often shared at parent teacher nights or parents may view them by asking the teacher.



Food

As we endeavour to provide a nurturing environment for the children, we also purchase and prepare foods of a high nutritional standard. Grains are either organic or biodynamic as are fruit and vegetables where possible.

- ❖ Morning tea and lunch, following a weekly rhythm, will be prepared during the morning. The children do not need to bring anything from home. We ask families to bring a locally-grown vegetable to share.
- ❖ Filtered rainwater is readily available during the day and at lunch, therefore fruit juices are unnecessary. Children are reminded to drink water regularly particularly during the summer months.

Here are two blessings we use in preschool to help build an atmosphere of gratitude and appreciation at mealtimes.

Earth who gives to us this food,
Sun who makes it ripe and good,
Dear Earth and Dear Sun,
Thank you both for all you've done.

Blessings on the blossom,
Blessings on the root,
Blessings on the leaves and stems,
Blessings on the fruit.

Morning tea and lunch is prepared by the assistant with the children each day according to a weekly rhythm.

Health

The Pre-school teachers take a special interest in your child's wellbeing and would be happy to discuss this with you at any time. A well-rested child who is fed a wholesome diet is best prepared to withstand illness. It is normal however for children to experience illness as they grow.

As parents you know best when your child shows symptoms of illness. The lively preschool environment is often very demanding and beyond the capacity of a child who is unwell. Please make arrangement so your child can be in a quiet, restful environment until they are fully recovered. Please allow your child at least one full day of rest at home after illness. The preschool teachers will make

every effort to support you in keeping your child healthy. **If your child is ill or will be absent for other reasons, please notify the school office in the morning.**

In an emergency we will use the information you have provided regarding contact numbers, doctor's details and specific instructions. Many childhood illnesses are contagious. Please inform the teachers if your child has contracted such an illness so the information can be forwarded to others.

For recommended minimum periods of exclusion from school, pre-school and child care centres, in cases of and contact with infectious diseases parents may refer to the National Health and Medical Research Council. Parents of children with rashes, skin infections or any symptoms of infectious diseases should consult their GP for a diagnosis and treatment when necessary and to find out if the child should be excluded from school. The class teacher must be notified immediately of any positive diagnosis of a childhood illness.

The NHMRC recommends that children who are physically unwell should be excluded from attending school. More information may be obtained by visiting the following website:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/files/ch43.pdf>

First Aid

The School is equipped to provide only basic first-aid. Together with usual first-aid procedures we use homeopathic first-aid remedies. Approval by parents for first-aid treatment is given by signing the Application for Enrolment form.

Medication at School

Should a student need to take medication during school hours, a signed AND dated form from a parent/guardian is required. The form and the medication should be delivered directly to Preschool Staff in its original container with Pharmacy label attached. NO MEDICATION (including PRESCRIPTION, NON-PRESCRIPTION AND NATURAL REMEDIES) WILL BE ADMINISTERED WITHOUT WRITTEN CONSENT AS STATED HERE.

Birthday Celebrations

The teachers regard your presence in the Preschool as a blessing and are grateful to share this special event with you.

The unique birthday ceremony given by each teacher can be a memorable occasion for your child. For the Pre-prep children, we create a very gentle celebration within the class rhythm so not to overwhelm them. With the Prep children, we warmly invite parents to participate in the celebration.

A verse for the night before the birthday:

When I have said my evening prayer
And my clothes are folded on the chair
And my mother switches off the light
I'll still be..... Years old tonight.
But from the break of day
Before the children rise and play
Before the darkness turns to gold
Tomorrow I'll be years old.
.....kisses when I wake
.....candles on my cake.

Festivals & Seasonal Celebrations

We can also mark the rhythms of the year through the changing seasons and the coming and going of festivals. As the year weaves from one season to another we are provided with the true reason for preparation and celebration. For the young child the preparation is half the joy. They love decorating the room, completing craft, baking special treats and learning songs and verses chosen just for that particular festival. The stories that are told give the children a pictorial understanding of the festival and speak very deeply to them without our having to explain anything.



Our seasonal festivals are times when families and friends are invited to preschool to watch the children share a simple ceremony, songs, stories or games. A lovely sense of community is felt during our festivals and we look forward to sharing them with you. We hope to bring a better understanding of these seasonal festivals in our parent evenings, for it is the celebration of festivals in our community which is one of the most deeply fulfilling experiences for both young and old. Festivals are held in the last week of each term.

Each room has a nature table which changes with the seasons. Autumn brings nuts, pumpkins, banksias, grains and leaves. The Winter garden is bare and simple. Summer has shells and flowers. Spring bursts forth with colours, children love this table. You might let your child have a small table or display space at home to create his or her own nature table with nature's treasures gathered from walks or outings. In this way children learn about the world around them and simplicity and wonder are honoured.

Parent Participation at Preschool

During your child's second year of preschool, parents are welcome to spend time in the room doing ironing during Terms 2, 3 & 4. This will be organised via a roster system. We allow the children to create their own play. We don't become directly involved in their play, but provide guidance when necessary. To maintain the harmony that has been established in the room, parents will be encouraged to work with us in the same manner. Parents are reminded that it is a privilege to be a guest observing the children "at work". Any concerns should be discussed with the teacher and treated confidentially.

Preschool Parent Teacher Evenings

Throughout the school year, your child's teacher will schedule a series of parent teacher meetings. These meetings are your opportunity to hear regularly from your teacher how things are going in the class and to learn more about child development and Steiner education. There is also an important social aspect to these occasions in that they help build the circle of loving adults around the children. A parent of each child is expected to attend the parent evening each term.

Home Visits

Home visits are a special time for the child and teacher to strengthen relationships. They give the children an opportunity to feel a connection between home and school. This visit gives the teacher a picture of the child's home life, which can be very helpful in understanding the child more deeply.

Parent Teacher Interviews

The teachers are always grateful for information regarding significant circumstances or changes in your child's life. As we share the common goal of nurturing the child, we need to keep communication flowing.

Teachers are available to discuss any issues or concerns that may arise. Please speak to the teacher to arrange a time that suits. Yearly Parent Teacher Interviews provide an opportunity for sharing impressions, concerns and goals for the child by both parent and teacher and can deepen our understanding of the child as well as strengthen our work together. These are usually scheduled as progress reports in Term 3 and at other times if needed.

Parent Education

There is a very active parent education group within the school. They plan a variety of workshops, guest speakers and other opportunities for parents to learn more about Steiner education each year. We encourage parents to attend as many of these as they can, as they are an ideal opportunity for enriching your time at our school as well as growing in knowledge of what the children are doing and why. Our Wellbeing Officer, Liz Blomkamp, runs Present Parenting Courses at school. There is an expectation that one parent from each family will attend a course. Watch the School Newsletter for details of these events.

Communication Book

Each classroom has a communication book on the sign-in table for parents to communicate morning messages. The purpose of the book is to share information about your child, whether that is a lack of sleep/changes in household routine/carpooling messages/morning emotions. Each morning the messages are checked by 9.15am by teachers, who will follow-up on this information where needed.

Please be assured that we will phone you if we need to contact you regarding your child's wellbeing. For this reason, please ensure the school office is kept informed of changes to your family's contact details.

Class Parent Contacts (P & F Reps)

Each year two members of the parent group takes on the position of Class Contact. This person acts as a liaison between the teacher and the whole Preschool to bring questions/enquiries from the parent group to the teacher, to relay information from the teacher and to organise helpers for Festivals.

RESOURCES

Child Protection

Every student has the right to feel safe and free from harm while at the school. We expect that you show respect to school staff, fellow parents and other students and expect that you receive the same respect in return. You should never allow yourself to feel unsafe, without reporting it to someone you trust.

The Child Protection Procedural Statement is available from the School office.



Dress Code

Although we do not have a school uniform, we do ask parents to follow the dress code below:

- ❖ Children's clothes are to be neat, clean and well fitting. The recommended materials are natural fibres. Clothing needs to be appropriate for the season. Pre School children are not 'little adults', therefore fashion items e.g. Midriff tops are inappropriate.
- ❖ Clothes are to be plain colours, without any printing, advertising, numbers, pictures or caricatures. Through our work we have noticed how commercial images affect the little children. Colours of the rainbow are recommended. Fluorescent colours are not suitable. Black is not to be the predominant colour.
- ❖ Hats that give adequate protection are necessary.

Please provide spare clothes for your child in case they are needed.

- ❖ Beach gear is not appropriate.
- ❖ All clothing must be labelled.
- ❖ **Footwear:** Children to wear sturdy, protective shoes at all times at Pre School, including coming to and departing from Pre School. Time-consuming lace up shoes are inappropriate. Slippers can be ordered by the treasure house. Inside shoes are to be worn. Thongs are not permitted.
- ❖ **Hair:** Please ensure that your child's hair is brushed and tidy. Hair longer than shoulder length needs to be tied back.
- ❖ Make-up and fashion accessories such as rings, necklaces, bracelets, earrings (with the exception of studs or sleepers), and stick on tattoos are not to be worn.

Personal Hygiene

As we have composting toilets, please familiarise your child with these.

In the interests of personal hygiene all children must be toilet trained upon entering preschool. This means that children must be able to recognise when and where to go to the toilet and be capable of wiping their own bottom.

As with all young children, accidents do occur occasionally. If these occur more than once a week a request may be made for the child to be kept at home while the issue is addressed. When “trained” in the appropriate ways, the child will be allowed to return to school.

Discipline

In the Steiner Preschool we strive to understand the nature of the young child and create a programme which allows for appropriate balance of “breathing in” and “breathing out” activities. This secure rhythm can eliminate some of the difficulties, which are often found. Creative ways are used to redirect the children and teachers model ways of resolving issues among children. When required, teachers may use “time in”, a period of time spent working with or helping one of the adults, until the teacher feels that the child is ready to rejoin his or her classmates.

We modify unwanted behaviour by reinforcing positive examples of expected behaviour and offer children alternative choices if they are engaged in disruptive play.

If difficulties are persistent, a teacher may request a conference with the parents. The adults can then assess the situation and work together to find ways to help the child express him or herself in more socially appropriate ways. Sometimes children can also be helped by changes in diet and daily routines. Parents can also be of assistance by informing teachers of changes at home that may result in unusual behaviour by their child.

Most importantly, we want to emphasise that good communication among adults is most helpful for the children during these formative years. If, in the case of extreme behaviours and after the above has been followed, the child, teachers and parents will work with the Discipline Policy. Refer to the back of this booklet for more information.

Head Lice Policy

The problem of Head Lice in the school can easily get out of control if left unchecked. Regular lice and nit checks will be held throughout the school year. All children’s hair will be checked during a preschool session by an experienced parent or teacher. Children will be sent home if head lice are found and cannot return until the outbreak is controlled.

Sun Protection Policy

Exposure to ultraviolet radiation has documented health risks. Teachers are committed to minimising these dangers by following these guidelines:

During summer month’s children not wearing hats will be kept inside, on the verandah or in the undercover sandpit area. “No Hat – No Outside Play”

Children will be encouraged to play in the protection of shade. Teachers will request clothing protection on shoulders and arms when necessary. Preschool will provide sunscreen. Please do not send in coloured zinc creams. If there are any concerns about this please see your teacher.



Resources for Parents - Learning About Child Development

Noosa Pengari Steiner School has a small library of books which parents are welcome to borrow. (An initial parent library membership fee of \$50 applies and can be paid at the school office.) Some of the books are available at the local library or can be ordered from the Treasure House or local bookstores.

The Genius of Play (2001)	Sally Jenkinson
Free to Learn (2001)	Lynne Oldfield
Ready to Learn (2002)	Martyn Rawson & Michael Rose
The Incarnating Soul	Joan Salter
The Education of the Child	Rudolf Steiner
Work & Play in Early Childhood	Freya Jaffke
You Are Your Child's First Teacher	Rohmina Baldwin
Festivals, Family & Food	Cary & Large
The Waldorf Parenting Handbook	Cois Cusick
Endangered Minds	Jane Healy
Lifeways	Davey & Voors
Lifeways 2	Smith & Schaefer
The Way of the Child	A.C. Harwood
Children At Play	D. Udo de Haes
Phases of Childhood	Bernard Lievegood
Mothering With Soul	Joan Salter
Beyond the Rainbow Bridge	B. Patterson & P. Bradley
Happy Child, Happy Home	Lou Harvey-Zahra
Creative Discipline, Connected Family	Lou Harvey-Zahra

Please keep this Handbook handy, as there may be times throughout the year when you may need to refer to it.

**"If a child has been able to Play
To give up his whole being to the world around him
He will be able in the serious tasks of later life
To devote himself with confidence and power to the service of the world."**

Rudolf Steiner