



•Milkwood•
Steiner School

Kindergarten Handbook

Educating the Whole Child - Head, Heart, Hands



Milkwood Steiner School

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Welcome to Milkwood Steiner School Kindergarten

Many different paths lead children and their parents to Milkwood Steiner School. We are delighted you have chosen to become part of our school community.

The Kindergarten is a beautiful and secure sanctuary, in which the children can begin their journey into the wider world.

During the first seven years children are physically forming and live very much in their imagination. This great capacity to enter into imaginative pictures and stories is a good place to begin the process of learning. Free, creative play is considered the best preparation for self-realising adult life.

For Kindergarten children, this is the beginning of their journey as members of a social group. There is so much to learn! This is a time of figuring out that there are others who have a different perspective than they do, a time of learning how to share, a time of figuring out how to play successfully with different children, and a time of feeling comfortable and safe in someone else's care besides their families.

All children have their own way of greeting the world around them and it is our intent to lovingly guide and help each child become more comfortable and skilled at being with others. This may be through a redirection of their activity or energy, helping them express through words their emotions (especially the older ones), or giving them an activity away from others such as helping the teacher do a task, so that they can collect themselves to be able to happily play again.

The children begin to know the importance of three things: respecting and being kind to others, respecting and being patient with one's self, and respecting the materials we use in the world around us.

The following three statements can sum up our approach to early childhood education:

- Imitation of adult role models who are engaged in wholesome activities and work develops gross and fine motor skills and provides a sound basis for confidence in self and trust in the world.
- A sense of wonder is cultivated through activities in nature. Celebration of seasonal festivals fosters enthusiasm for learning and life-long moral strength.
- Imagination in play, dramatisation and artistic work provides the first step of a cognitive process that is furthered through the academic work of the elementary school. Much genius originally springs from the fantasy and imagination of individuals whose creative thinking enables them to visualise how things are and also how they might be.

Rhythm and Activities

In Steiner education, the day is usually divided into three parts and activities are repeated over three or more days. Typically the same circle games, rhymes and story will be told each morning for the full week.

For young children, activities requiring concentration and will, such as stories, plays, poems, songs and rhymes, are taught in the morning. Activities that evoke the feelings such as painting and music are taught mid-morning and activities that require less concentration such as games and walks are taught in the afternoon. These afternoon activities bring the group together, teaching social skills such as sharing, cooperation and patience. They also begin the teaching of observation and wonder which are built on in later years by science and nature study classes.

In the early years, days are known by the children as 'walk day', 'painting day', and so on. Teachers feel these rhythms help to maintain health and well-being. Imitation, imagination and rhythm are the key words in Steiner education in early childhood.

Activities are based around the homelike environment of the Kindergarten, such as gardening, baking, painting or simple handcraft. Stories, songs and verses are chosen to harmonise with the season and the rhythm of the day.



A Foundation for Academic Learning

While the Kindergarten curriculum does not emphasise cognitive learning, it does prepare children for academic learning in many important ways:

- Foundation for language arts: Broad fundamental work in listening and speaking skills, including singing, proper pronunciation, rhymes that form the later basis of word families, poems, listening to and comprehending stories, which also provide vocabulary enrichment.
- Foundation for mathematics: Broad work in developing gross motor skills, graceful movement, balance, coordination, and dexterity in fingers and limbs; imaginative play with simple objects provides the basis for abstract manipulation of symbols in school.
- Artistic training: Beeswax modeling, watercolor painting, music, singing and Eurythmy and simple dramatizations.
- Social skills: Learning to live, work and play in a group, sharing and taking turns; practicing common courtesy and politeness.
- Work habits: Learning to complete tasks, helping to clean up after themselves and working within the gentle structure provided by the daily rhythms of similar activities.



Day to Day Information

Kindergarten Hours:

Morning Drop-Off at the Kindergarten between 8:00am – 8:15am.

The Kindergarten school day commences at 8.15am (teachers will be on duty from 8am) with play outside until 8.15am when the Kindergarten bell rings. This is the signal for parents, who haven't already done so, to say goodbye.

Please drop your child directly off at the Kindergarten area. If you come to school later than 8.15am please go to the office to collect a late notice and then wait outside the Kindergarten door until the Class Assistant collects your child so as not to interrupt any activity happening inside. Punctuality is essential to establish regard for the rhythm and routine of Kindergarten. Sometimes children may have separation difficulties, in which case we will plan the morning with parents accordingly.

Afternoon Pick-Up at the Kindergarten is 2.35pm.

Parents are asked to wait at the end of the verandah at pick up time so as not to distract the children from their afternoon activity. At the end of the day there will be no play in the garden or inside as everything will have been packed up to rest overnight ready for the next day.

Absences:

Please let the Office know if your child is unable to attend school, by calling 8947 0608. You will receive a call from the school after 9am if your child is not present.

Conversations:

The Kindergarten Teacher is available at any time during the school year, by appointment, for afternoon interviews. Pick-Up is also a good point to set a time to meet if an interview is needed. Also, please check the Kinder Message Board which is on the wall above the children's bag rack and the black board on the door. If you are unable to catch her before or after school to chat, the best way to contact the Kindergarten Teacher is by email or you can leave a message with the front office.

Morning Tea:

Morning tea is a shared meal in the Kindergarten and is provided by the school and prepared with the children. Fruit is provided every day and a different additional dish is also provided each day according to our weekly rhythm.

Things to bring each day:

- A simple, nourishing packed lunch. Please no lollies, chocolates, chocolate flavoured items or pre-packaged foods (children will be asked to keep such items in their lunchbox for after pick up).
- Comfortable sun smart play clothes - please no black clothing or shirts with logos, writing or eye-catching pictures. No jewellery or toys, thank you.
- Change of clothes every day - sometimes the children get wet playing in the sandpit/garden - 2 or 3 changes of clothes are needed sometimes.
- Please no thongs or strappy/fashion sandals. Covered shoes and socks or comfortable shoes to wear while playing or going on bush walks on non-rainy days.
- Hat with protection for the face and neck. A hat is compulsory for outdoor play. 'No hat, no play'.

Things that stay at school:

- Lambswool for rest time. Please mark your child's name clearly on the back. They will have a cubby hole to keep their lambswool in and have access to it other times during the day if they need to have a rest.
- Gumboots are essential - for rainy days and our bush walks.

Toys:

We prefer that no toys from home are brought to school. They often get lost or cause disruption to our happy days together and may contribute to exclusivity in playtimes where we prefer to encourage inclusivity in all aspects of our days together.

We love to see toys from Mother Nature's garden, a lovely shell from a beach walk or a beautiful piece of bark from a bush hike.

Birthdays:

We celebrate your child's birthday in the Kindergarten. We will discuss this with you as the time approaches for your child's celebration day.

Lost Property:

Please label all belongings clearly and check the lost and found box if anything is missing.

Festivals:

The rhythmic cycle of the year is celebrated in all Steiner schools. We foster a sense of harmony with the changing seasons. These changes are reflected in our activities and nature. The children will recreate the event in a dramatic story or ceremony. Milkwood celebrates seasonal and cultural festivals. We have developed our programs to include the six seasons

of our local region. Families will be given notice of Seasonal Festivals via the newsletter and invitations. We encourage you to attend wherever possible as they are a special part of your child's experience and parental involvement are an important part of these celebrations.

Parent Teacher Meetings and Communication:

Parents and Teacher evenings are held twice-yearly, in semester 1 and semester 2. These evenings are significant as they inform parents of the curriculum and educational philosophy of the school and are an opportunity to have questions answered. It is important that parents are well informed about what happens in the classroom and school expectations so that there is harmony between the school and home life.

Newsletters:

The weekly email newsletter is sent to all families and friends of Milkwood. This newsletter provides the main means of communication to keep up to date with what's happening at school and in the school community. The newsletter is also available on the school website.

Contributing/ Working Bees:

Milkwood Steiner School community is diverse and welcoming. We support each other in our parenting journeys and respect and honour Milkwood traditions and community. There are many ways you can become involved in the Milkwood school community. We have working bees, craft groups and gardening groups which you are always welcome to be part of. As a parent, grandparent or friend of the school you can meet other parents at our Café's and events and come along to school performances.

In the Kindergarten there are often small tasks which help to keep the gardens looking beautiful and bountiful. Please talk to the Kindergarten teacher and ask if there are any tasks needing doing. Modelling a caring attitude for the Kindergarten is admired by the children and your offer of help by raking the pathways, watering the gardens, tending the gardens are much appreciated.

Throughout the year we have Working Bees held on a Saturday morning. Generally, these mornings have a focus requested by the teacher or an idea of a parent (with approval) and the projects are supported by parents. Keep in touch via the newsletter for dates and jobs list.

Recommended Reading

[6 – An Important Year](#), *Astrid Sunt Translated by Anniken Mitchell*

[The Importance of Sleep](#), *Susan R. Johnson M.D.*

[Young Children in the Digital Age: A Parent’s Guide](#), *Nancy Carrlson-Paige.*

