

CASTLEMAINE STEINER SCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN

CORE PHILOSOPHICAL STATEMENT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

PHILOSOPHY

Steiner Education here at the Castlemaine Steiner School is designed to enhance, enrich and support the developmental phases of childhood.

Dr. Steiner referred particularly to three essential phases – each of approximately seven years duration. In each of these phases, different faculties are coming to birth, different growth forces are operating and the child learns in correspondingly different ways. To provide meaningful support for the child in the journey from infancy to adulthood, curriculum and methodology needs be based on a deep understanding of these phases. It is of the greatest importance that each stage is experienced fully and not cut short – the aim of our education is to help children develop strengths for a lifetime.

STEINER EDUCATION

This section makes explicit how the Steiner educational philosophy is linked to the learning activities in the curriculum.

Enacting our philosophy

Our educational philosophy is enacted in many ways through multiple modes.

The philosophy is reflected in:

- The physical structure of the school ie buildings, facilities, PG, Kinder, Prep, Primary (1-4) Middle and upper Primary (5-8)
- The structure of the day i.e. the organisation of the parts of the day
- The implementation of the curriculum: scope and sequence within and across years
- The structure of our staffing model: i.e. the teacher staying with their class for multiple years
- Methodology of teaching:
 - i. Main Lessons (thematic teaching model)
 - ii. middle practice lessons
 - iii. afternoon lesson structures
 - iv. the emphasis on the faculties of thinking, feeling and willing
 - v. the appropriate use of the time of day for particular activities
 - vi. The use of the Arts and crafts, music and drama to provide whole body learning and integrated approach to learning.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD

The developmental stages (7 yr cycles) encapsulated between the ages of 0-7yrs and 7-14yrs are catered for in our early childhood Facilities and our Primary-Early secondary school.

Play Group

One of the initial entry points into the school is Play Group where children aged 0-4yrs accompanied by their parents, are led by an experienced Steiner facilitator into the world of play and work. The program centres around shared involvement parent/child in activities such as cooking, craft, story-telling and play, all modelled by the adults.

Kindergarten

The next stage of our Early childhood program is Kindergarten which caters for children turning 5 Mum's and Dad's now leave their little ones for 15 hours a week in the care of experienced educators and assistants to live into the kindergarten world of story, song, play and work and is centred upon meeting the needs of the child's developing will. Imitation is the key learning modality of the child making the attitude of the educators all the more important.

Prep

Each early learning facility (separate building) caters specifically for the developmental stage of the child and serves the needs that are coming to birth in that year, honoring the necessity for imaginative play and the opportunity to imitate worthy adults in a secure environment. The strong rhythms and routines that operate in our early childhood facilities enhance the sense of security experienced by the children.

PRIMARY TO EARLY SECONDARY: CLASSES 1 TO 8

The second stage of child development, covering the period roughly from Class 1 to Class 8, has attempted to cultivate a rich feeling life, a strong sense of imagination and picturing ability, and an appreciation of beauty and aesthetics whilst developing the foundational academic skills necessary for life.

The change of teeth (6 – 7 yrs) is the beginning of the primary phase of schooling. Due to the balanced possibilities provided in the first phase the child's most important physical formative process is completed.

The emerging capacity of memory and imagination are now ready to be called upon and exercised. Through this working, together with a strong emphasis on rhythmical and musical activities the feeling life of the child is developed.

Strong rhythms in lessons (within each day, each week, each year) as well as stories of nature, mythologies and metaphors concerning life, all work to strengthen the child's inherent forces (their feeling, imaginative faculty) and provides them with a knowledge that lives.

To the extent that the teacher is the one who brings all of this into the child's experience, we speak of this as the phase of authorship or authority. It is of great importance that our primary teachers are artistic; that speaking, moving, drawing, writing and singing are all developed artistically and imaginatively in order to cultivate the feeling life of the child.

We are conscious that during the Primary phase there is a burgeoning thinking faculty. Our discipline in the Steiner School is to work together the child's development phases with the tasks and subjects of teaching in an optimum manner.

CURRICULUM ORGANISATION

The Steiner Approach to Curriculum

The College of Teachers, the body responsible for the educational impulse of Castlemaine Steiner school, works from the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework (ASCF), created from Rudolf Steiner's indications. Each teacher presents this artistically and imaginatively while remaining within the guidelines as set out in this document.

The Steiner curriculum integrates the humanities, arts and sciences, and strives to give the students a picture of the whole world. We seek to develop all the necessary 'academic' and intellectual abilities (eg in reading, writing and arithmetic) that are required for adult life.

We aim to provide a healthy balance of artistic and practical activities alongside the academic activities. It has a special commitment to the development of an awareness of beauty in each child both through the special emphasis placed on painting and calligraphy as well as helping each child to develop musical and craft skills. So-called 'non-art' subjects such as mathematics and communication, carpentry and knitting, sports and languages other than English are taught imaginatively and artistically.

Subjects are studied in relation to each other, so that the children perceive their unity, and do not have them split into separate compartments. Music, creative arts, handwork and languages are integrated into the lessons.

Every lesson involves the head, the heart and the hand, so the children can be involved in a balanced and creative learning experience.

The aim is to educate not just the intellect, but the whole child.

Grounding children in their cultural heritage is considered essential to the full development of each individual's potential as well as an awareness of the contributions to humanity of other cultures.

Curriculum Scope and Sequence

Understanding what content to bring and when, are the key elements in meeting the child's needs at any particular moment. The curriculum content is well crafted in academic scope and includes indications as to its timely introduction in order to meet the spiritual, intellectual, social and physical needs of the children.

ORGANISATION OF LESSONS

Overview

Lessons on a daily basis are timetabled to meet the levels of awareness of the child as their faculties of thinking, feeling and willing become more or less active as the day progresses. For example, the morning time is a period where the forces of thinking are the most awake, hence the placement of the 'Main Lesson' structure where new material is introduced. This does not preclude activities that constitute holistic learning such as the arts.

In the afternoon the forces of thinking have diminished but the forces of the 'will' are more activate, necessitating physicalized activity, giving rise to more practically based lessons, such as craft.

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'Main Lesson' Teaching and other lesson curricula (before morning tea)

One distinctive feature of Steiner schools is their use of 'Main Lesson' blocks for core teaching. These blocks run for 3-4 weeks, based on a learning area that matches the average stage of development and learning needs of the class, and constitute the first and major lesson each day. They also include some components of verse recitation and singing, mental arithmetic, physical activity, recorder playing and other activities.

Steiner teachers see the Main Lesson's great strength as being in providing continuity of thematic teaching over an extended period, and in the deep exploration of particular subject areas that it allows in an integrated way.

In any year there is a balance amongst the major core areas of English, mathematics, the arts, sciences and humanities, and is sequentially based from year to year.

The Main Lesson is taught in the first two hours of each day. A particular subject is studied for 3 – 4 weeks and to allow for a deep and enriching learning experience to take place. The Main Lesson endeavours to unite all the powers of the soul by engaging the child's thinking, feeling and willing.

The content of the Main Lessons are based on the major epochs of history, from the folk wisdom in fairy tales, the human qualities in animal fables, the Celts, the deeds of great people and their connection with nature, to the mighty legends from the Old Testament, Norse myths and ancient Indian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman myths and odysseys. Mathematics and science are also taught in the Main Lesson in addition to language and the humanities.

We encourage the children to present their work artistically and with care. Through the experience of intellectual and practical work, they can *live* major historical periods and stages in human development.

Practice Lessons (between morning tea and lunch)

In the middle period of the day, practice sessions take place, to cover the subjects not being taught in the Main Lesson and to practice concepts introduced in previous Main Lessons. Other more rhythmical subjects such as LOTE, music and art are also taken at this time.

Afternoon lessons (after lunch)

After lunch, the activities are will-oriented, where crafts and manual skills are developed. These include gardening, games, wax, modelling, craft and bushwalks.

ORGANISATION OF STAFFING

Teachers

A Steiner teacher has a particular commitment to providing learning opportunities which generate a genuine enthusiasm for learning within each student.

The class teacher remains with their class for many years, getting to know the children's learning styles and challenges and building strong relationships with both children and parents. This deep understanding gained by the teacher over a long period allows the child to develop in their own time, gently moving forward at their own pace.

A Steiner teacher is committed to 'bring out the best' that each student is capable of achieving in each activity and subject taught. The classroom environment is therefore not one of competition between students but rather one of support and nurturing for every student and for the class as a whole. Over time each student should come to appreciate and respect the capacities and qualities of each of his or her classmates.

The class teacher's purpose is to enliven all that is brought to the child with imagination and creativity. As the primary school child lives in a world of pictures, the teacher uses this medium through story-telling and description. A balance is created between intellectual work and creativity.

Castlemaine Steiner School Primary Specialists

The Primary teaching staff involve a wide range of specialist teachers. These teachers are part time and teach Handwork, Music, Spanish, French, PE, Horticulture, Cooking and Support Education (Special Needs Resource and Extra Lesson).

Australian Context

Steiner Education in Australia

In Australia there are over 40 Steiner schools, many of which are relatively small and still growing primary schools; some which have not advanced yet beyond the end of the junior secondary school phase and a few which are fully established and accredited high schools to Class 12.

Castlemaine Steiner School is a full member of Steiner Education Australia (SEA) an Incorporated Company, and draws support, advice and assistance from the more established schools when needed.

International Context

Castlemaine Steiner School is one of over 500 schools worldwide that is based on the educational philosophy, and curriculum and teaching practices, indicated by Rudolf Steiner. There are large numbers of Steiner schools in Europe, particularly in (the former West) Germany and Holland, in North America and Australasia.

Steiner education is recognised and accepted by educational authorities in all these countries as a valuable educational system that uniquely complements government and other independent schools. Steiner schools in these countries are registered, and their courses up to year 12 accredited, almost as a matter of course, provided they can demonstrate delivery of the internationally recognised curriculum and teaching practices associated with a Steiner school. The educational philosophy itself is well understood and accepted worldwide.

ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING (REFERENCED IN OUR ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING POLICY)

The Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework (ASCF) forms the foundation of CSSK's curriculum framework for Classes Prep to 8. Where ASCF Draft documents occur we will use them as a guide while also referencing against ACARA Curriculum Standards.

As Steiner education is internationally recognised, Steiner Education Australia have worked with ACARA to produce an alternate curriculum framework, in order to protect the integrity of Steiner education philosophy and pedagogy. The documents were developed from Steiner's indications, not only to support schools and teachers, but for submission to government authorities, highlighting the mandatory content, knowledge and skills of the Australian Curriculum in a Steiner rich context. This curriculum enables students to progress along this learning continuum in a developed pedagogical framework.

In our school, parents and teachers constantly build pictures of each individual's development through their achievements and challenges over time. Reporting is geared to offer continuous opportunities to share knowledge and understanding in order to plan and support the teaching and learning for all students.

In the primary years the responsibility for this duty falls to the Class Teacher as the child's caregiver and educator on a daily basis whilst at school. All teachers report on each child's learning outcomes to contribute to a picture of the Student's experience at school.

To support and underpin our work with students and families in educating children at CSSK, we have implemented the SEA Curriculum as an assessment tool across all classes in Primary (Classes Prep to 6) and Middle years (Classes 7-8). The SEA Curriculum reflects consistency and congruency in recording and assessing individual and whole school progress in teaching and learning. The SEA Curriculum focus on assessing knowledge, behaviours and skills compliments the three-fold approach inherent in Steiner philosophy. We reference our students against Australian Curriculum progression

points relevant to the age and stage of development within each class in non-ACARA approved subjects. These outcomes assist in building a picture of teaching and the student's learning.

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Program is based on four (4) interwoven areas that concentrate on achieving the philosophical foundations for CSSK.

1. The implementation of a process of monitoring and recording an individual student's progress against ASCF from Prep to Year 8.
2. A coordinated Testing/Assessment program that covers both formative and summative assessment based on the learning standards.
3. Moderation and Reporting at all year levels from Prep to Year 8. This evidence based moderation occurs in faculties, mentors and college meetings.
4. Review process/procedure for teaching and learning e.g mentoring, professional development, curriculum days

To enable students' learning progress, teachers are constantly modifying their teaching practices to engage the ever changing dynamics of the classroom through reflective practice:

1. The first is the curriculum (ASCF/Australian Curriculum) that defines WHAT it is that students should learn, and the associated progression or continuum of learning.
2. The second is pedagogy that describes HOW students will be taught and supported to learn.
3. The third is assessment that identifies HOW WELL a student has (or has not) learnt specified content.
4. The fourth is the ANALYSIS of the teaching/learning cycle.
5. Carrying this information into the next planning cycle.

In summarising, review and reflective practices are fundamental for ongoing Student and Teacher development and learning.

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REPORTING

Twice a year teachers will provide written reports to parents/guardians; midyear and end of the year.

Reporting comprises

1. Initial parent/s interview - The class teacher meets with parents and care-givers to share the growth, development and general experiences of the child from birth to present time. This may include home visits and for students entering the school from another school, examination of previous school reports and diagnostic reports completed, student work books and examples of the child's artistic endeavours.

2. Class Meetings - The impulse for these informative sessions is to meet the needs of the class and support the teaching and learning of Steiner education at CSSK.

Timing : generally four class parent meetings over the year, one each term. Dates are entered into the school diary at the beginning of the year.

- Activities included: practical experiences of classroom activities; study groups; speakers may be invited to bring deeper understanding of educational pedagogy or subject area; a colleague or mentor may attend to offer support or bring information; student and new teachers may attend to gain experience.
- Content: content varies to meet the needs of the class and may include: information about curriculum, excursions, teaching strategies and techniques, health and well-being of the children, whole school directives; camp planning; discussion of parent concerns; looking at children's work.

3. Parent/Guardian and Teacher interviews - Parents receive a written report on their child's school performance twice a year at the end of semester one. A meeting time is encouraged to share information and strategies for future teaching and learning at the end of semester one.

The following may be included in the discussion:

- specific information about the child's strengths and weaknesses
- strategies for improvements
- recommendations from Support Education or specialized learning or healing modalities
- specific individualized programs may be developed with parental approval and home support encouraged.

At any given time either parents or teachers may request a meeting to be arranged when there is an area of concern.

If the parent feels uncomfortable to approach the class teacher the matter should be taken to the Principal. An arrangement which meets the needs of all concerned will be made.

Teachers and parents may ask for a support person to attend parent-teacher meetings. (Refer to CSSK Communication Policy)

All of these activities help teachers and parents to be well informed about the child and their progress.

4. Written reports - Parents receive a written report on their student's school performance twice a year, at the end of each semester. All reports are confidential documents intended for parent use, but it is reasonable to expect that parents will discuss report contents with their children. A meeting time is encouraged to share information and strategies for future teaching and learning after receiving the written report.

Written reports are the end product of several assessment (formative and summative) tools. These may include:

- achievements according to criteria and outcomes
- checklists of achievements
- observations
- where relevant, Support Education reports

Strategies for improvements of student outcomes are discussed at parent interviews.

Parents can ask the school to provide them with written information that clearly shows their child's achievement in comparison to that of other students in the class.

Date Reviewed: Term 3, 2016.

Updated: Danilo Paglialonga (24/08/2016)

Signed: Principal

Next Review: Term 3, 2019.

