



# PARENT HANDBOOK 2019

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# WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL!

Dear Parents

Helena River Steiner School is made up of a caring community of parents, teachers, staff and students. We hope this publication will help parents understand the school's operations, policies and approaches.

I encourage all parents to become involved in the social life of the school.

Through community we are able to create a vibrant and nourishing environment for our children and ourselves.

***“A healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each one is living.”***

*Rudolf Steiner*

If you are unable to find the answers to your questions within this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact me or Tammy at the office.

Warm regards,

Tanami Magnus  
Principal

## 2 PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

### 2.1 VISION

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

RUDOLF STEINER

### 2.2 MISSION

Helena River Steiner School aims to provide education based on the principles of Rudolf Steiner to children and families in the Swan Valley area.

We will do this by:

- Fostering the healthy unfolding of each unique individual in a creative, nurturing and respectful community.
- Providing a curriculum and pedagogy appropriate to the developmental stage and needs of the learner. We educate the whole human being in thinking, feeling and willing through learning experiences which engage the head, heart and hands, guided by a sense for goodness, beauty and truth. We seek to inspire love of learning, curiosity for life and moral engagement with the world that will carry on throughout the lifespan.
- Striving to engender care, respect and reverence for the natural and spiritual worlds.

## 3 HISTORY

From little things, big things grow...the flourishing new school that is Helena River Steiner School in Midland grew from an idea that first took shape in a little parish hall in a Guildford park.

Guildford Steiner Playgroup began mid 2013. As local parents joined this new group, they discovered the value of the Steiner method in nurturing their children. In 2014 we gathered more educators and family community, formed River Blossom Education Association Inc and moved to new premises in Midland on part of the old Midland Primary School site.

In 2015 our playgroups expanded and we also ran several other educational activities, including home school workshops and curriculum support and a kindergarten program one morning a week. In 2016 we began our first mixed-age kindergarten (3-6 years) operating as an Education and Care Service. We also began the process of applying for school registration.

In December 2016 we officially changed our name to Helena River Steiner School and took on the lease of the property next door for our new primary class to expand into. On 26 June 2018, we received non-government school registration.

We now have a thriving Parents and Friends committee, a professional Board which oversees the school's operations, a Craft Group and a Study Group, while our play areas and grounds continue to transform into a more lush and inviting environment.

### 3.1 Steiner in the World

Helena River Steiner School in Midland, Perth, is part of a network of Steiner schools throughout WA and Australia. Every Steiner/Waldorf school is independently formed and operated and thoroughly unique, but part of a big and conscientious "family" dedicated to educating modern children according to the developmental and pedagogical principles described by Rudolf Steiner.

The first Steiner/Waldorf school began in Germany in 1919, with the goal of developing morally responsible, integrated individuals with a high degree of social competence and independent thinking. There are now more than 1050 independent Steiner/Waldorf schools and nearly 2000 kindergartens worldwide.

Steiner education provides a curriculum which has withstood the tests of nearly a century and continues to bring children what they need, at the right time, with the right balance of arts, academics, physical and social learning.

To learn more about Steiner educational philosophy see [www.steinereducation.edu.au](http://www.steinereducation.edu.au)





## 4 HOURS OF SCHOOL OPERATION AND ATTENDANCE

### 4.1 OFFICE HOURS

The office is open from 8.30 am to 3.30 pm, Monday to Friday, and can also be reached on 9374 0230 or by email at [reception@hrss.wa.edu.au](mailto:reception@hrss.wa.edu.au). If you are unable to get through directly on the phone, please leave a message.

### 4.2 SCHOOL HOURS

#### 4.2.1 Playgroup

2 mornings a week 9.15am – 11.15am  
(Thursdays and Fridays)

#### 4.2.2 Pre Kindy 3 Year Old

1 half day a week 9.00am - 12.30pm  
(Thursdays)

#### 4.2.3 Kindy 4 (children turning 4 any time within the year)

Three half days a week 8.45am - 1.00pm  
(Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays)

#### 4.2.4 Kindy 5 (children turning 5 any time within the year)

Monday and Tuesday 8.45am – 3.10pm  
Wednesday 8.45am – 2.10pm  
Thursday and Friday 8.45am - 1.00pm

**Please note:** Afternoon Kindy Care for K4/K5 children is also available from 1.00pm – 3.10pm (except for Wednesday, early close)

#### 4.2.5 Kindy 6 (children turning 6 any time within the year)

Monday - Friday 8.45am - 3.10pm

#### 4.2.6 Lower Primary (children in Class 1&2)

Monday - Friday 8.45am -3.10pm

#### 4.2.7 Upper Primary (children in Class 3-6)

Monday - Friday 8.45am -3.1 pm

#### 4.2.8 Early Close

All classes will close early for staff meeting every Wednesday afternoon at 2.10pm.

### **4.3 Holidays**

Term dates are set according to WA School Terms, although we have an extra week holiday in the middle of the year and some pupil-free days may be different due to planned staff professional development sessions. The school is closed over school holidays, although modified office hours will apply.

### **4.4 Term Dates and Calendar**

Please check the school website and newsletters regularly for term dates and other events. Please keep a printed copy of the [term calendar](#) at hand so you are abreast of the schedule.



## 5 ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

We place a high value on full attendance as it enhances learning and social opportunities and is respectful to both teachers and peers.

We encourage parents to consider the healthy benefits of rhythm within the school day, the week and the term.

There is a direct correlation between healthy physical development of the organs and nervous systems when rhythm in everyday life is strong.

We believe that it is important that the students experience the cycle of the day, the week, and the term; from the beginning through the build-up and continuation, and through to the conclusion. We therefore encourage you to attend all days, and be at school early, ready to begin on time. Our teachers open the doors of their classrooms at 8.45 am and they expect all students to be present and ready to enter and start the day's activities together.

Rest at home, however, is obviously advisable for during illnesses.

### 5.1 If someone else will be collecting your child

If you would like someone else to collect your child, they must be named as an Emergency Contact and approved collector of your child on their enrolment form. Otherwise you must inform the office in writing (by note, email or text) of the person you wish to collect your child.

In a shared parental care situation we require a copy of the Court Order which states any arrangements for the collection of the child.

### 5.2 If your child will be absent

If your child is sick, away on holidays or unable for some other reason to attend, please advise the office either verbally, by email or text. If you are phoning out of hours, a message can be left.

If your child has been absent for two consecutive days without notification, the office will contact you to ascertain why.

**Please read our [Attendance Policy](#), found on our website, for full attendance requirements, expectations and procedures.**

## 6 SCREEN TIME

Helena River Steiner School strongly encourages no 'screen time' for the young child (0-7) and limited time for older children. This includes television, DVDs, iPhones, computer games, children's educational laptops, and any other electronic devices.

Any time your child is engaged in screen time, their body and senses are dimmed and their imagination is compromised. From Rudolf Steiner's perspective, this imagination is essential for the young child's brain development:

*"This work of the imagination shapes and builds the forms of the brain. The brain unfolds as the muscles of the hand unfold when they do the work they are suited for."*

Please be mindful of any time your child is exposed to screen time. We specifically ask that your child does not have any screen time on the day they come to school.

Please talk to any of the staff if you would like ideas of alternative activities to provide your child with. We also have plenty of articles available if you would like to learn more about the effects of screen time on the developing child.

## 7 GENERAL INFORMATION

### 7.1 What to Bring

- A bag which can hang on a hook, clearly labelled.
- A hat – plain colour, broad-brimmed or legionnaire-type hat with neck protection, clearly labelled.
- A water bottle, labelled.
- A spare pair of clothes if in kindy– our children often engage with the elements and may end up grubby!
- A raincoat and gumboots in winter
- A nutritious homemade lunch (no sweets or packaged goods please)

### 7.2 Lunches

We ask parents to provide healthy, wholesome lunches for their children, avoiding sweets such as chocolate, yoghurts and anything in packets such as chips.

In the interest of our environment and recycling we ask that lunches, as much as possible, be packed in reusable lunchboxes. Please refrain from using mini fruit and yoghurt packs and small drink cartons.

### 7.3 Clothing

We strive to create a warm and gentle environment for the children in our care and we ask for your support from home. Please send your child to school dressed in practical, comfortable and simple clothing suitable for activities with sand, dirt, water, paint etc. Please ensure your child's clothing is sun safe in summer and very warm in winter with several layers.

As per our [clothing policy](#), students are not to wear black; clothing with prominent logos, loud or negative prints of any kind (e.g. skull and cross-bones); or TV or movie or computer game characters; nail polish; make-up or jewellery. Also, shoulders should always be covered, so no singlets, strap tops or midriff tops. Plain primary/pastel colours are preferred.

For kindergarten please also send a change of clothing in your child's bag each day.

#### **7.4 Shoes**

Children are to arrive with comfortable play shoes -no thongs.

#### **7.5 Toys**

We ask that your child does not bring toys from home to school, unless they have been invited on a special occasion to do so by their teacher. If they are keen to share something with the group, we would rather encourage something of interest and beauty for our nature display or story corner.

## 8 CURRICULUM

We follow the ACARA recognised Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework which is different to the Australian Curriculum or the Western Australian Curriculum. It is a rich and inspiring exploration through time which develops a large array of skills.

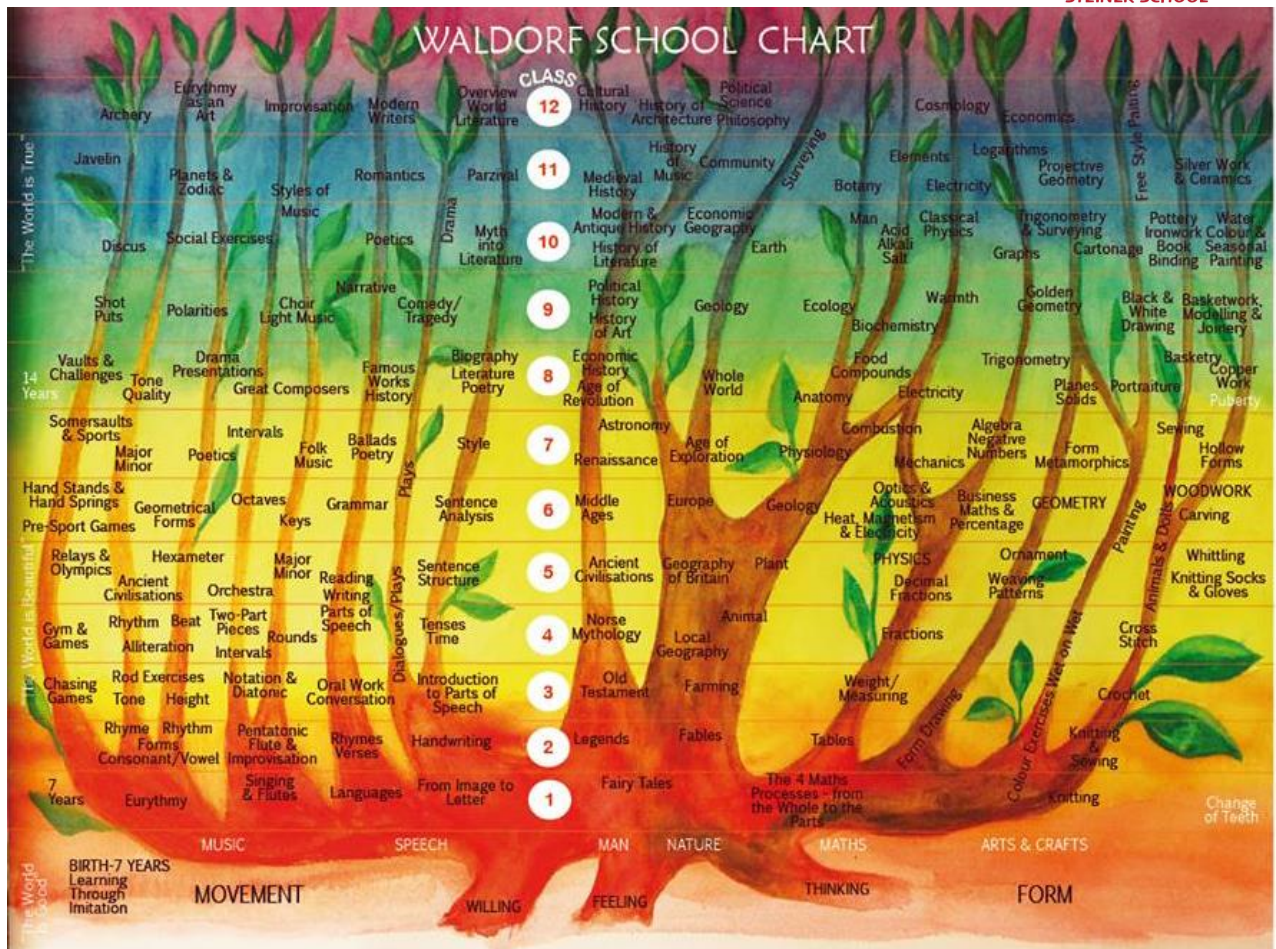
The curriculum is designed to address the development needs of the specific age of the student now, rather than always be focusing on some point in the future. Important goals of our education are to develop students in creativity, flexible thinking, emotional strength, moral integrity and a will to engage in life. To achieve this, we have more than just a different teaching approach - it is an art of teaching that weaves together a number of vital interconnecting aspects that includes teaching methods, curriculum and a clear philosophy, all of which gives Steiner education its unique identity.

The Steiner curriculum offers a balance of academic, artistic and practical activities so that the young person is thoroughly prepared for life.

For more information about the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework (ASCF), including copies of frameworks for all levels, please see [www.steinereducation.edu.au](http://www.steinereducation.edu.au)

***“Receive the children in reverence, educate them in love, and send them forth in freedom.”***

Rudolph Steiner



## 8.1 Early Childhood (0-7 Years)

The Waldorf/Steiner Playgroup and Kindergarten provides an environment where natural beauty and reverence for life abounds. At this age, children learn the world through doing.

They use imitation and creative play to master skills in movement, communication and social interaction.

## 8.2 Playgroup (0-3 Year Old)

Helena River Steiner School Playgroup welcomes children from 0 to 4 years of age. The Playgroup room offers warmth, simplicity, and beauty. The child's kinship with nature is honoured through story, song, verse and the celebration of the seasons, with a rhythm flowing through the morning that the children learn to follow and feel secure in.

Children play with beautiful, natural, hand-made and open-ended toys that encourage their innate imagination to blossom. The rich world of their imagination is often inspired by the nature stories told and the domestic activities unfolding around them. Children learn the social skills of sharing, taking turns, waiting, packing away and giving thanks for food. It is within this wholesome environment that meaningful social experience and a sense of community begin to grow.



This class creates an intimate play experience for young children while parents have an opportunity to build relationships with other parents, do craft projects and learn about the Steiner approach to early childhood and education.

Our playgroup leaders are qualified Steiner educators and health care professionals.

### 8.3 3 Year Old Pre-Kindergarten (3 Year Old)

Three year olds who are ready to spend some time away from parents and caregivers can explore the little wonders of the world with a small group of three year old friends for one morning a week.

These small groups (between 4 and 8 children) are led by a loving early childhood teacher who will introduce them gently to the structures of a class with activities such as painting, drawing cooking, gardening, wax modelling, circle time, story time and of course playing.

Each child is able to feel totally secure within this supported and nurturing environment. Organic morning tea is provided (which the children help make).

### 8.4 Kindergarten (3.5 – 6 Year Old)

Helena River offers a mixed-aged Kindergarten class for children aged between 3.5 and 6 years.

In the Steiner philosophy of child development, children need above all to play, be actively engaged in the world around them and develop foundational skills until they are six/seven, when formal academic learning starts. At this age they learn through doing, imitating, experiencing and absorbing all around them.

***"If a child has been able in his play to give up his whole loving 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**

Children at our Kindergarten learn through creative playtime; circle song time; arts and crafts; cooking; organic gardening, and story time. They gain listening and recall skills and build vocabulary and imagination from weekly storytelling and puppet shows of traditional tales from many countries and cultures, full of rich imagery and language.

Rhythm and routine provide essential nourishment for our Kindergarten children. In their activities they explore the changing seasons, and celebrate the festivals of the year with their family and friends. Our teachers show care for their environment by weeding, cleaning, making and fixing things, providing meaningful activity for our children to emulate. At Helena River we encourage the traditional values of gratitude, giving, respect, kindness and manners.

Our curriculum values nature, beauty and arts. In our warm and inviting Kindergarten room children are surrounded by beautiful colours, natural fabrics and hand-crafted toys and equipment.

### **8.5 Primary School (6-12 Year Old)**

The primary years in a Steiner school are a shared journey. Children keep the same teacher from Class 1—Class 6 so as to develop a strong and caring relationship and build upon each child's known strengths every year. There are very few discipline issues as the teacher knows the children so well and a bond of affection and sense of responsibility to the group forms.

The curriculum is based on the developmental needs and stages of the child year by year, so that the right topics are brought at the right time to fully engage the curiosity and striving of the child. Steiner/Waldorf education is inherently steeped in the Arts, so that children often learn their core subjects through the artistic mediums of music, painting, crafts, woodwork and drama. Classes are small and children develop a sense of community service which starts with the care of their own school environment and works its way through to their place in the wider world.

## **9 FESTIVALS**

We mark the rhythms of the year through the changing seasons and honour and celebrate them in festivals. As the year weaves from one festival to another we are provided with a true reason for preparation and celebration. The children experience meaningful preparations decorating the room, completing season-related 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 special forces at work in different seasons and speak very deeply to them without our having to explain anything.

Our seasonal festivals are times when families and friends are invited to share with the children a simple ceremony, songs, stories, activities and meals. A lovely sense of community is felt during our festivals and we look forward to sharing them with you. Festivals are traditionally held four times a year: for Autumn/Easter, Winter, Spring and Advent/Christmas.

We may also add celebrations that honour the cultural or religious traditions of the attending families in any given year.

## **10 BIRTHDAYS**

Birthdays are a very important event for the child and we celebrate this with a special, reverent ceremony involving stories about the child's life, songs, pictures, and of course food. We ask parents to provide a plain un-iced homemade cake for this occasion and in Kindergarten parents will be invited to join us for the birthday ceremony.



## 11 COMMUNICATION

### 11.1 Keeping Abreast of Happenings

We believe that shared two-way communication between the staff and families is extremely important. The newsletter, noticeboard and emails all aim to keep you in touch with what is happening at the school and in the community.

It is important you make time to read the communication materials so you understand what is happening at the school and how best to support your child.

### 11.2 Class Carer

Each class has a Class Carer -a parent who has volunteered to be the liaison communicator between the teacher and the parents. They will remind parents of upcoming events, helping rosters or class needs. Similarly, if parents have any group wishes or concerns, the Class Carer can communicate those to the teacher. Class Carers usually communicate via text messages.

### 11.3 If You Wish to Talk with the Teacher

If you need to discuss something lengthy and important with the teacher, please do not attempt this at drop off or pick up time, instead arrange an appointment in advance with the teacher so they have the time and space to give full attention.

### 11.4 Class Talks / Parent Information Nights

Class Talks are held regularly and refer to Steiner's suggestions regarding the needs of the developing child at any particular age, as well as things specific to the class itself. Parents should attend these talks as often as possible. There is always an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns.

## 12 PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Helena River Steiner School is a community-run school that cannot exist without parent involvement. Parents are asked to consider that, when enrolling your child, you are also agreeing to commit some of your time and energy to assisting with caring for our school.

It is vital that parents fulfil their obligations throughout the year so staff can focus on providing a safe and inspiring environment for the enjoyment and education of the children. Parent involvement and community care with shared energy is what keeps Helena River Steiner School flowing –and growing!

When families enrol their child here, they agree to volunteer 4 hours of their time per term to help the school. This can be done through attendance at Busy Bees, helping with cleaning, office duties, fixing things, gardening, joining the P & F etc. It is a family's responsibility to hand in their Volunteer Hours Form at the end of each term. If you have not been able to do your hours, a Fee in Lieu of Volunteers Hours will be charged.

## 13 FEES

Please see our website for the current [fee schedule](#).

## 14 POLICIES

You will find many of our policies –including Grievance and Concern, Attendance, Enrolment, Clothing, Behaviour, Administering Medicines etc- on our website. We welcome any queries regarding how we manage things, so please contact the office if you wish to speak to somebody about any policy or procedure.