



HELENA RIVER STEINER SCHOOL MIDDLE SCHOOL FAQs

Q. Why is a Steiner High School needed now?

Helena River Steiner School (HRSS) has experienced significant growth, as Steiner's educational philosophy has become increasingly popular globally.

We have recognised the need, locally, to offer a Steiner High School, starting with Stage 1 (Middle School) for a Class 7 class in 2021. Time is of the essence. Our first Helena River Steiner School students will graduate Year 6 at the end of 2020 and are seeking local High School placements.

According to Steiner Education Australia, the Federal Government's Gonski 2.0 report (p.33) placed "great emphasis on critical and creative thinking, social skills and problem-solving - capabilities which the Steiner philosophy has long since cultivated". This high school is not just for students who have had a Steiner primary education. It is all families who are wanting a more unique community experience for their child's secondary education, with a curriculum aimed at guiding communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity in their learning journey.

Students can often get lost in huge high schools. We offer a very relationship-based approach with a healthy balance of academic, artistic, social and physical learning, producing

strong, confident and purposeful adults who are ready to contribute to the world.

Q. Why Midland for Perth's eastern suburbs?

We believe there is a local demand for a holistic schooling alternative to mainstream curriculum high school education. This has been a contributing motivation behind the school's decision to offer a Steiner high school servicing Midland and its satellite districts.

The school is within walking distance of Midland's major transport hub, servicing diverse industries and culture. This includes Curtin University's Midland Campus, which is a 3,000sqm, three-storey Health Sciences educational facility for multidisciplinary training; and the Midland campus of the North Metropolitan TAFE campus. Further, Midland is one of the State Government's "Strategic Centres", attracting investment in community infrastructure, amenities and education.

Q. Small classes can be a worry for social cohesion and relationship diversity. What is minimum enrolment numbers for Class 7 that you will proceed with?

Initially our class sizes will be small—which brings both advantages and disadvantages. The minimum number we aim to proceed with is eight enrolments.



HRSS is committed to building healthy social, emotional and cognitive relationships and shared cultures, in all our classes, using a restorative approach to working with children, parents and teachers on any classroom relationship concerns brought to either the Teacher, Principal or Faculty Coordinator.

Q. How do Steiner Schools accommodate academic and culturally diverse capability(*)?
Steiner schools hesitate to categorise children; differentiation in a Steiner classroom is inherent in the pedagogical approach and philosophy.

A given child's weaknesses in one area, whether cognitive, emotional or physical, will usually be balanced by strengths in another area. It is the teacher's job to try to bring the child's whole being into balance.

A child having difficulty with the material might be given extra help by the teacher or by parents; tutoring and an individual learning plan might also be arranged. Correspondingly, a child who picked up the material quickly might be given harder problems of the same sort to work on or might be asked to help a child who was having trouble.

HRSS will work with parents supporting their children at home, and the Teacher, to meet children's individual learning journeys.

Applicable support funding and resources will be sourced.

Q. How well do Steiner high school graduates do in tertiary education if they have not sat the ATAR exams(*)?

Steiner graduates have been accepted as students into and have graduated from some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in Australia.

Steiner students have been graduating from Steiner schools for over forty years—*Glenaeon* in Sydney, established in 1957, is the oldest Australian Steiner school. The oldest Western Australian Steiner High School graduates turn 41 this year. Many are University Graduates and Post-graduates, with their own children enrolled in WA Steiner Schools.

HRSS will be discussing alternative entry pathways with WA universities for its Class 12 graduates, who will be educated in line with the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework (ASCF) and undertake their Class 12 major research project in their final year. Information on a recently announced University of Western Australia alternative pathways research project can be found at: <https://www.uwa.edu.au/news/article/2020/august/new-study-to-investigate-results-of-alternative-pathways-to-atar>

Q. Will HRSS Middle School students study digital technologies()?**

HRSS will develop its Digital Technologies approach in consultation with the Class Teachers and in line with the ASCF.



Learning to navigate the interface between the analogue and digital world is crucial for the wellbeing of young people, and it is best served by starting with a good grasp of analogue technology in the early years.

As is the case in the application of all curricula, the professional discretion of the teacher and school allows for adjustments to meet the needs of an individual cohort of students. In the ASCF, Digital Technologies from 7-10 is not an elective subject, but mandatory for all Steiner schools.

Q. Why are digital technologies introduced in Middle School not Primary School(**)?

An important principle underpinning Steiner education is that young children need to communicate and learn deeply without the mediation of complex technology.

This ‘unplugged’ experience is seen as crucial for children to develop an uncluttered self-image and self- efficacy. Based on their rich communication skills and ability to produce original creative work, students are well placed to master digital technologies in high school. Many of the skills children learn holistically are transferable to digital technology:

- How digital technologies work – sequential steps, algorithms, and data recording and analysis.
- Creative use of digital technologies – activities to meet challenges, communicating ideas, and technological safety.

- Research and analysis – creating complex patterns and representing that using pictures, charts and diagrams, and understanding how numbers and symbols can represent data.

The skills they learn in primary are transferable to a digital world – critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and collaboration for example. What they miss is the impact that technology has on early memory development – research demonstrates that calculators, spell-check and Google-search have been implicit in developing skills at the expense of memory.

When Steiner educated students enter high school their high school years, they embrace digital technologies effectively, creatively and ethically.

Q. Who is involved with developing and establishing the High School?

An Expression of Interest to form a High School Advisory Group attracted applications from current and past Steiner High School Teachers and Administrators. Four people are volunteering their time, expertise and energy to assist the Board, Principal and Faculties create the foundation of the HRSS High School Stage 1 – our 2021 Middle School.

The newly appointed Class 7 Teacher will join the Advisory Group next term, and brings with him a wealth of classroom, curriculum planning and administration experience and expertise.



Notes and references:

These questions are either based on or reproduced from the South Australian Mount Barker Waldorf School website (<https://www.mtbarkerwaldorf.sa.edu.au/content/faq#>)

** This information is from Steiner Education Australia (<https://www.steinereducation.edu.au/steiner-education/frequently-asked-questions/>)

*** This information is reproduced from the Yallingup Steiner School (<https://yss.wa.edu.au/enrolment/frequently-asked-questions.html>).

Steiner Education Australia, Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework: Digital Technologies Curriculum, June 2016 (Members Area), accessed September 1, 2020.