



# Rainbow Ridge School for Steiner Education



# KINDY

# Parent Information Booklet

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Rainbow Ridge Kindergarten. Early childhood programs in a Steiner School provide a nurturing environment based on the understanding of the young child's developmental needs before the age of seven. The Steiner kindergarten is a sacred place where children are provided with a nurturing home like environment in which they are allowed to develop and grow. Like a flower flourishing in a garden, the young child is surrounded in warmth, beauty, a healthy rhythm and opportunity to engage in purposeful and creative play.

The task in the first seven years is to help the child develop physically in a healthy way, especially to protect and stimulate the developing senses. This provides the proper foundation for the future development of the child's social, academic, and spiritual life. The kindergarten teacher strives to create an environment in which the young child feels secure, loved and recognised as a spiritual being.

The kindergarten child learns through being physically active. As young children are naturally dreamy and not yet capable of abstract thought, it is important for them to dwell in the world of imagination. It is through creative play, storytelling, poetry, singing, painting, drawing, building, beeswax modelling and baking that children are allowed to develop all the preliminary concepts in maths and language.

As young children learn through imitation, the adults in the kindergarten are engaged in meaningful activity and lead by example with respect to caring for the children and the kindergarten itself. The kindergarten teacher is conscious of providing words, gestures, and an environment worthy of a child's imitation and absorption. Through the adult's management of time and activity, children will come to self-management without premature requirements for intellectual thinking.

Children are surrounded by, and imbued by the rhythms of the world in which they live – from the rhythms of breathing in their bodies to the daily rhythms of sleeping and waking. Children flourish when their daily activities are arranged rhythmically to reflect the natural order of life. In the kindergarten, the daily rhythm is a natural process of “breathing in” during group times and “breathing out” during play times. Coming inside and going outside. The weekly rhythm includes painting and bread on Tuesdays and Thursdays and baking and drawing on the other days. The program is designed to connect the children to the rhythm of the seasons and the planets. The rhythmic quality in the child's environment supports the building, organ-forming activity within the physical body and brings an ordering to the child's movement.

## Daily Rhythm

8.50 - 9.30	Children arrive and have downstairs play
9.30 - 9.40	Pack up, gather outside Kindy for songs and finger rhymes
9.40 - 10.00	Morning verse & Morning Circle
10.00-10.20	Morning tea
10.20 - 11.40	Inside play, craft, painting, baking
11.40	Game & story
12.00	Lunch
12.30 - 1.40	Outside play
1.40-2.00	Drawing, bread making
2.00 - 2.30	Rest time
2.30 - 3.00	Afternoon tea & home

## VERSE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN (for parents to recite)

May light stream into you  
That can take hold of you  
I follow its rays with the warmth of my love  
I think with my thinking's best thoughts of joy on the stirrings of your heart  
May they strengthen you, may they cleanse you, may they carry you.  
I want to gather my thoughts of joy  
Before the steps of your life  
That they unite with your will for life  
So that it finds itself, in strength, in the world evermore through itself.

## VERSE FOR PARENTS

Into my body  
Let there pour strength  
Into my feeling  
Let there flow warmth  
Into my thinking  
Let there shine light  
That I may nurture this child  
With enlightened purpose  
Caring with hearts Love  
And bringing wisdom  
Into all things

## What To Bring

Each day your child needs to bring a healthy lunch and morning tea. Please leave any lollies or chocolates at home and try to limit packaged foods. Wherever possible we opt for natural products. Even lunch containers can be a cane basket or steel camping tin rather than plastic.

Even though we have water always readily available for drinking, we ask each child to bring a named water bottle to access during outside play or to and from school.

It is essential to pack a change of clothing as the children often play with dirt and water, a spare plastic bag to put dirty clothes in is also helpful. Sometimes several layers of clothing are required, including singlets and socks, to meet the needs of play and changing weather.

Home toys are not encouraged as they can cause competition and sadness if they become lost or broken.

A plain coloured school bag.

Please note: **NO ADVERTISING OR CARTOON CHARACTERS ON CLOTHING, HATS, SCHOOL BAG OR LUNCH BOX.**

## Clothing and Shoes

As we are endeavoring to create a gentle, calming mood – we encourage clothing in soft colours.

General advertising can affect the imaginative play of the little children. We ask that you refrain from sending your child to school with these, and that children are not dressed in black or fluorescent colours. Natural fibers such as cotton and wool are durable, comfortable and healthier than synthetics. And please, play clothes not good clothes.

A sturdy pair of outdoor shoes is required. During indoor play in the cooler months the children and staff wear soft slippers. These will be ordered for each child and are paid for by your school fees.

Wide brimmed hats are essential for outside play. Children need a hat, to stay in their school locker. A lovely selection is available at the school office.

## **Arrival and Departure**

We open our doors to welcome the children each morning at 8.45am. In Kindergarten we are laying the foundations for all later learning; we consider punctuality as being very important. It is appreciated when children arrive as close to gam as possible so they can begin the day with their peers and establish a clear and healthy rhythm.

Parents are asked to drop the children up at the lockers, where they will then be taken downstairs by the loving hands of the assistant or teacher. It works best if you can settle your child in as quickly and quietly as possible, allowing the child to enter into the mood of the Kindy activities. From the commencement of the school day, the teacher's attention and energy is focused fully on the children and the quality of their environment. The morning or during school hours is not a time when teachers are available to discuss questions from parents. However, if you need to inform the teacher of something concerning your child, please do so briefly, or leave a note/message in the message book found on the locker at the kindergarten entrance. Our day finishes at 3.00pm. It is important that you pick up your child on time. Please wait up at the bus stop for the children to be brought up at the end of their day. Pick up time is a more suitable time for short discussions.

### **Morning Verse**

Good morning dear earth  
Good morning dear sun  
Good morning dear stones, dear flowers each one  
Good morning to the animals and the birds in the trees  
Good morning to you and  
Good morning to me

### **Lunchtime Verse**

Earth who gives to us this food  
Sun who makes it ripe and good.  
Dear earth, dear sun  
By you we live  
Our loving thanks to you we give.  
Blessings on the meal

## **Parent/Teacher Communication**

We believe that the quality of interaction between the parents (and other primary carers) and the teachers is very important. As we share the common goal of nurturing the children, we need to keep the communication flowing. Please feel free to make a time to talk privately with teachers if you have any questions or concerns. This can be done by contacting the office and leaving a message, which the teacher will return as soon as possible. Sending a note to school is also another option. Once the Kindy day is in progress, the teacher's full attention and loving interest is required to be with the children, so this is not a good time for discussion between parents and teachers. Regular parent information evenings are held to allow for more insight into the Steiner philosophy, and this provides opportunities for bridge building between other parents and staff.

## **Parent Participation**

If you do find yourself spending time in our Kindergarten you will notice that the teacher is calmly, joyfully and busily occupied in domestic or craft activities. This is part of creating our mood and rhythm, and we ask that you contribute in the same way as the teacher and assistant do. Rather than becoming involved in the children's play, we allow them to create their own play. The attitude and reverence of the teacher and assistant adds to the environment with the joyful 'hum' it creates as the children are free to go about their play.

## **Festivals**

A special emphasis is given to the cycles of nature – as the seasons change, this is reflected in our songs, games, stories, and craft. A pivotal point of each season is celebrated at the solstice or equinox. Our seasonal festivals are times when families and friends are invited into the Kindy as the children share a simple ceremony, songs and games. A lovely sense of community is often felt during our festivals and we look forward to having you join in the festivities with us.

## **Home Life**

Just as children are carried along by the regular rhythms of the school day, so too are they nourished by the regular rhythms at home. As difficult as it is in these modern times to establish set meal times and bedtimes, please try to do so. It is very important for young children to go to bed at the same time every night and we recommend that this be no later than 8.00pm to allow for plenty of sleep. 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 presence of the television and other media in a child's life is often clearly seen in the kindergarten. The strong influence it has on little children is visible in many ways. The child may seem stuck in creative play, unable to play anything but a Superhero, Transformer, Power Ranger etc. 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 wonder and delight.

Perhaps the greatest loss is the dimming effect it has on the child's wonderful imagination. It is the imagination which provides the foundation for learning and growth. TV watched before bedtime is very disturbing to a child's sleep.

We encourage you to explore alternatives to TV. Examples may be found in any domestic work. Favourites are cooking, washing dishes, yard work and gardening.

## **Childhood Illnesses**

If your child is not well please keep them at home until they have recovered. It is often hard for a child who is not well (or even very tired) to find the capacity to cope with social demands of the active Kindy day. Many common childhood illnesses are also contagious, and we need to be aware of how easily illnesses can be passed on. Please feel free to talk to the teachers if you are unsure whether to send your child.

## **Class One Readiness**

In most Steiner schools, a general rule of thumb for Class 1 readiness is that the child needs to turn 7 by Spring in Class 1. For children whose birthdays are later in the year we will assess on an individual basis and with consultation with the parents. There are many indicators of class one readiness and as part of the ongoing assessment process the teacher will be available to discuss this with you. It is interesting to note that recent approaches to school entry, even in the mainstream system, are recognizing that many learning difficulties have occurred from starting children in formal education too young. Many contemporary educators in universities are now reinforcing Steiner's suggestion to allow the first 7 years to be rich in imaginative play while introducing more formal education in the 7<sup>th</sup> year.

## **Rest time**

There is a time set aside everyday for the children to rest for a short while. This provides a much needed balance to our busy day. Children are not necessarily expected to sleep (although some do) – rather it is time out for quietness and rest.

We provide mattresses for the children and covering sheets and cotton blankets for the cooler months. Each child also makes a piece of felt to stitch on to their very own pillow.

## **Birthdays**

A birthday is seen as an important milestone in a child's life. We regard your child's presence in kindergarten as a blessing and are grateful to share our appreciation of this important ritual. We like to celebrate each individual child's birthday at Kindy with a simple ceremony. We ask that parents come to kindy at 2pm with a cake, candles and photos representing each year of your child's life or short anecdotes of things that happened in each year. The children love to share in this experience.

### **A Verse for the Night before a Birthday**

When I have said my evening prayer  
And my clothes are folded on the chair  
And 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!

The following books can be found in the  
'PARENTING RESOURCES /ANTHROPOSOPHY' Section of the library

- You are Your Child's First Teacher
- The Incarnating Child
- Beyond the Rainbow Bridge
- On the Play of a Child
- Free to Learn – Introducing Steiner Early Childhood Education
- Mothering With Soul
- Children and Their Temperaments
- Phases of Childhood
- A Child's Work
- The First Three Years
- Kindergarten Education
- Brothers and Sisters
- A Guide to Child Health
- A Healing Education
- Enchanted Birthday
- Easter in Autumn
- The Child's Changing Consciousness
- Lifeways – Working with Family Questions
- Creating Avenues for Change
- Sanctuaries of Childhood
- Education Towards Freedom
- Handbook for a Steiner Playgroup
- The Children's Year
- Child's Play – Games for Life
- The Wonders of Childhood