



## Special Character Guiding Principles

19 October 2014

### Child Development

Te Ra is a Waldorf school. Understanding the child as a being of body, soul and spirit is a core principle on which Waldorf education is built. Teachers carry a loving respect for the dignity and unique individuality of each child, and recognize the child as a being of doing, feeling and thinking. These three soul faculties manifest in different ways at different ages, and the Waldorf curriculum is designed to work with, and support, their development.

For the child's body, soul and spirit to integrate in a healthy and age-appropriate way, we distinguish three phases of childhood which shape the way children learn: in the years 0-7, children learn, through imitation and play, about the essential goodness in the world; in the years 7-14, the school curriculum aims to inspire children with a sense of wonder at the beauty around them; in the years 14-21, young people are guided toward independent thinking through which they can endeavour to find their own truth, now imbued with the earlier foundations of beauty and goodness, and thereby become free, self-determining adults.

### Waldorf Curriculum - Schooling the Hands, Heart and Head

The education from playgroup, nursery and kindergarten through to primary school is an integrated journey. The curriculum is comprehensive and holistic. Each part arises from this distinctive picture of child development in its own particular way. Teachers strive to educate and develop all aspects of the child's being in a healthy and unhurried manner: physical, practical, emotional, artistic, intellectual, moral, social, cultural and spiritual. In broad terms, the education aims to integrate art, science and spirituality. Within this framework, the curriculum is adapted to reflect the unique needs of each class.

Waldorf education nurtures a sense of wonder and reverence. It is open to all faiths without giving religious instruction, celebrating our common humanity. In marking the passage of time through the year, Christian festivals are celebrated together with Matariki and other cultural and seasonal festivals.

The school draws on a century of Waldorf practice, assessing applicability of practice within a contemporary light for the context of Aotearoa today. We are committed to the ongoing evaluation of curriculum content, current processes, structure and practices within the school.

### Waldorf Teachers

Our teachers are informed by more than a century of Waldorf pedagogy and practice, based on an understanding of child development from both a physical and spiritual perspective. They are required to have training in Waldorf Education as well as a NZQA-approved qualification in teaching. Teachers are expected to commit to the ongoing study of Waldorf pedagogy, with a preparedness to take on their own path of inner personal development. Te Ra School promotes a setting in which teachers have the freedom to work creatively and artistically within the curriculum. Kindergarten teachers, where possible, remain with the child throughout their three-year kindergarten journey, and class teachers, where possible, remain with their classes for the seven-year primary school journey. This allows for a deepening human connection, and for a greater understanding of each child's development.

## **Waldorf Parents**

Active partnership with parents in the educational process and cultural life of the school is a fundamental element of our "Special Character". To ensure the best outcome for the child's learning, parents are asked to provide a home life that supports and fosters the learning environment of the school and kindergartens.

## **College of Teachers**

The College of Teachers is a group of teachers working at the management level. It is based on collegial leadership, collectively carrying the role of Principal as a team and sharing the responsibility for maintaining the special character that is inherent in all aspects of school life. The College exists to implement the principles upon which a Waldorf School is founded, i.e. 'self administration by the teachers in a non-hierarchical structure'. The School Coordinator carries the legal role and responsibility of the Principal within the framework of being an integrated school.

## **Waldorf Education in the wider context**

Waldorf education was originally created by the Austrian philosopher, educator, artist and scientist Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) and is based on educational principles arising out of anthroposophy. However, Te Ra is not bound to the words of Rudolf Steiner or anthroposophy. Te Ra Waldorf School also derives its impulse from its place on the Kapiti Coast, its time context as a school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its multi-cultural community built on the bi-cultural foundation of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Exploring anthroposophy beyond pedagogical principles is a matter of personal choice for teachers, parents and whānau. Examples of practical applications of anthroposophy can be found in economics (ethical banking, e.g. Prometheus bank), curative homes (e.g. Hohepa homes), medicine and pharmacology (e.g. Dr. Hauschka and Weleda products), performing arts (eurythmy, speech and drama), and agriculture (biodynamics, eg. Demeter certification).

## **Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

Te Ra Waldorf School, as a school in Aotearoa New Zealand, is unconditionally committed to upholding the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi - the Treaty of Waitangi.

## **Equity and Diversity**

Te Ra Waldorf School welcomes and celebrates the ethnicity and culture of every member of our community – child, parent, whānau and staff member – as enriching our diversity. While some of Rudolf Steiner's writings, originating at the turn of last century, contain discriminatory statements, at Te Ra we reject these and any other sentiments that have the potential to engender discrimination on any ground. In response, we have developed our "Declaration Against Discrimination" (enclosed herein or refer to [www.tera.school.nz](http://www.tera.school.nz)) to describe the ethos of inclusion and respect that we, as a community, are committed to upholding.



## DECLARATION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

Te Ra Waldorf School, on the Kapiti Coast, welcomes and celebrates the ethnicity and culture of every member of our community – child, parent, whanau, staff member – as enriching our diversity. The Kapiti Waldorf Trust, Board of Trustees, College of Teachers, Faculty and parent community board this waka which values our diversity and our great potential to contribute to the full embrace of Aotearoa's bi-cultural status and multi-cultural identity.

**Te Ra Waldorf School as a school in Aotearoa New Zealand is unconditionally committed to upholding the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi - The Treaty of Waitangi. Out of this commitment and within the worldwide Waldorf school framework, Te Ra Waldorf School does not support Rudolf Steiner's statements on race.**

Te Ra Waldorf School commits to the ongoing evaluation of current processes, structures and practices within the school to ensure our declaration against discrimination is fully realised. This is a living document, and as such informs the Te Ra Waldorf School Strategic Plan.

***"Piki, eke, te mutunga he aiō - There are ups and downs, but in the end all is peaceful."***

### *Waldorf Schools Framework*

- Waldorf schools pursue their pedagogical tasks out of the spirit of human rights, thereby contributing to building a society founded upon mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation between all human beings.
- Waldorf schools do not select, stratify or discriminate amongst their pupils and consider all human beings to be free and equal in dignity and rights, independent of ethnicity, nationality or social origin, gender, language, religion, or political convictions.
- The spiritual science of anthroposophy, upon which Waldorf education is founded, today rejects all forms of racism and nationalism. The Waldorf schools are aware, however, that there are words, ideas and statements in Rudolf Steiner's complete works which are not in concordance with this fundamental direction, are discriminatory, and rightfully regarded as offensive in this day and age.\*
- Racism and discrimination are not tolerated in Waldorf schools or teacher education institutes. The Waldorf school movement explicitly rejects any attempt to misappropriate Waldorf pedagogy or Rudolf Steiner's work for racist or nationalistic purposes.
- Waldorf schools have been working on the basis of these preceding principles since the first school was founded in 1919. Institutions working out of Waldorf education are today engaged throughout the world, on all continents.

*Based on the Stuttgart Declaration by the Association of Waldorf Schools (Bund Der Freien Waldorfschulen), 2007.*

***Receive the child in reverence, educate him/her in love and let him/her go forth in freedom.***

*Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925)*

*College of Teachers of Te Ra Waldorf School and Kapiti Waldorf Trust, 21 November 2012*

\* Anthroposophy as spiritual science is not bound to the words of Rudolf Steiner. As is the case with all other sciences, Anthroposophy is constantly 'becoming'; concepts from 100 years ago may be discarded today as they are held to be no longer true.