

Linuwel School Ltd



Information for Parents

1. Background Information

Introduction

“Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives”

Rudolf Steiner

Linuwel is a School for Rudolf Steiner Education for students from Kindergarten to Year 10, established in 1979.

Education to Year 10 aims to provide students with not only the skills necessary for further learning, but also an enduring love of learning - a most valuable asset for their personal growth and their contribution to society.

Qualities like self-confidence/esteem, respect for others, reverence towards all living things, initiative for creative action, an inquiring mind in relation to world events and the big questions of life, can be developed in the growing child through enjoyable learning experiences and age-appropriate content. The principles of Rudolf Steiner Education give us indications how to achieve this. For example, enthusiasm for reading and ability to read will best develop when the child is inwardly ready to read, and not necessarily through starting at an early age.

The teacher must have a deep understanding of each child's individual needs and the flexibility to allow for varying rates of progress. School work is presented in an imaginative and artistic way which engages the child's soul life and thus enhances well-being and love of learning.

Kindergarten

Before the change of teeth, learning takes place through imitation – not only imitation of actions but also attitudes and emotions. We endeavour to surround the Kindergarten child with a harmonious and rhythmical environment that conveys constancy and security.

In this ‘safe haven’ foundations are laid for the development of social skills through games and role play; fine motor skills through craft activities; early learning through drawing (pre-writing & pre-

number work), reverence for the world and its creatures through artistic activities, songs and stories.

The daily/weekly routine is very important, and “goodness” is a guiding concept.

Please note that the Kindergarten and surrounding garden is a Mobile Phone free area.

Primary School

Between the change of teeth and puberty the child understands the world through the emotional life. All subjects are introduced in story form, appropriate to the child’s age, engaging the imagination and developing an understanding of the individual in the world. The authority of the teacher provides the structure within which the personality of the child can unfold in freedom. “Beauty” is a guiding concept, and the class as a whole is an important unit.

Some primary classes may combine two year groups.

Secondary School

In these years the students’ powers of reasoning and judgement are truly awakening and the teacher is leader and guide in the search for truth. Learning is more thought – orientated and students are challenged by activities relevant to their individual growth, in preparation for their further education and life beyond school.

The Structure of the Day

The school day addresses the thinking, feeling and willing aspects of the human being by being organized in a threefold way. The morning lesson has a more academic, thinking element while the middle lesson accommodates artistic/rhythmical activities which engage the feeling life; in the afternoon will-developing subjects like craft and sport take place.

The School Environment

Being a small school, Linuwel provides a supportive and caring environment where the teachers are aware of each student. Combined class activities assist in extending students’ social experiences, and children are encouraged to interact with other age groups, reducing the influence of peer group pressures. The semi rural setting of the school provides an environment which is enjoyable for the child and fosters an appreciation of the natural world. We aim to provide a safe environment but not one where children are shielded from every potentially dangerous activity, such as climbing trees, on the precept that developing awareness of their physical capacities and limitations is essential to making sound decisions for their safety beyond school.

From early days, students’ schooling is linked to an expanding exploration of the world through outings and camps, where much personal growth takes place.

Competition and Testing

A fundamental principle of the school’s educational philosophy is cooperation and not competition. Each child’s strengths and weaknesses are acknowledged without judgement or ridicule.

Competition can create stresses which work against inner happiness and social harmony and is not promoted beyond team games and occasional sporting challenges.

In the primary years formal testing can also create stress and unhappiness, working contrary to an enjoyable learning experience, and is generally not necessary as the teacher has many opportunities to assess the child’s progress and achievements. National literacy and numeracy testing is a government requirement for years 3, 5, 7, 9 and students undertake these tests each year. Tests are introduced in a non-threatening way in the secondary school. Students completing Year 10 receive a Year 10 Certificate as a record of their achievement for future employers or other educational institutions.

Religion

The spiritual nature of life as described by Rudolf Steiner underlies much of what is done in the school, and while some aspects of this will at times be evident there is no attempt to promote any system of beliefs. All the major religions are studied so students develop an understanding of them and ultimately will be able to make informed decisions on religious matters for themselves.

Homework

In the primary school homework is not set on a regular basis. In the upper primary, projects may occasionally be set or books given to read but in general for these years the time after school is free for other activities and family life.

By the Years 7-8, homework is gradually introduced for reinforcement or completion of class work. This would start at about half an hour to an hour per weeknight, rising to 1-2 hours by year 10.

2. The Class Teacher

Central to the success of each child's learning and development is the relationship established between the child and the class teacher, who generally stays with the class for 6-7 years in the primary school and 3-4 years in the secondary school. This enables the teacher to understand each child deeply and provide for their needs as they develop, weaving their guidance into the artistic and imaginative fabric and activity of the day.

The school does not exist in isolation, and the child's home life has a strong influence on their school life. The teacher works most efficiently when there is good communication with the parents and a shared sense of working towards the same goals for the child's development. To this end there are parent teacher meetings each term and class performances to which parents are invited. Also the teachers make themselves as available as possible to discuss any aspects of the children's progress, and welcome any contact which will assist them in dealing with the children, such as when they might be upset or fragile for some reason. Likewise if the teacher has some pleasing progress to convey, or has concerns which need to be addressed, they will be in touch. Of course both parties need to work at maintaining a constructive parent-teacher relationship.

Parent Teacher Meetings

Parent teacher meetings are held for each class each term. This may be a combined meeting for part of the school, a single class meeting or individual meetings with parents. They provide the opportunity for parents to find out what the class is doing and how it is relevant to their children's progress and development, as well as to meet with other parents.

Reporting

In Kindergarten progress will be reported verbally at a parent interview at the end of each semester. For Years 1-10 a written report will be issued near the end of each semester, and teachers will be available for interviews in the following weeks.

3. Enrolments

1. Approximately 12 boys and 12 girls will be accepted into each Kindergarten year group. When accepting an enrolment the Kindergarten teacher may consider: the date of application; the enrolment of siblings in the school; and the parent(s)' demonstrated commitment to Rudolf Steiner education. A diversity of backgrounds is welcomed within the school.
2. Acceptance of additional students into classes 1-10 is at the discretion of the class teacher, taking into consideration the dynamics of the class as well as the factors above.
3. In the case of students entering Years 7-10, enrolment is probationary for six months, i.e. during or at the end of that time the class teacher can cancel the enrolment if the student is not integrating successfully into the class and school.
4. Enrolment occurs after an interview process. The first step is for prospective parents to arrange to meet the relevant class teacher at the school, with the child. At this meeting the parents and child see the school environs and classrooms and are introduced to the operation of the school and basic principles of Steiner education. In turn the teacher learns about the child and is informed of any factors which may have a bearing on the child's school life. If the parents are still interested in enrolling their child they are given the "Information for Parents" handout and asked to contact the teacher after having reflected on the meeting and the information received. If there is no place currently available but the teacher would otherwise accept the child then the child's name is placed on a waiting list. If a place is available and the teacher is willing to accept him or her, further meetings will take place where arrangements can be finalized and an enrolment form issued.

On receipt of the signed enrolment form and a non-refundable enrolment fee of \$200 the child's place is secured. A bond of \$500 is payable to the school during the term prior to the child's starting date. This will be refunded when the child leaves the school, less any deductions for unpaid fees or charges.

4. Discipline

The teacher's understanding of child development and deep concern for each individual provide the basis for establishing discipline.

In a small school, all teachers have the opportunity to observe and interact with each student. At staff meetings the combined experience and suggestions of staff can provide the class teacher with a wealth of strategies to win the child's trust and influence their patterns of behaviour. Central to the success of the school is the premise that the parent(s) and class teacher work together for the development of the child.

Where an unbalanced pattern of behaviour becomes evident the teacher will arrange to meet with the parent(s) to discuss the issue, consider possible contributing factors and look for ways in which

their combined actions could work for the benefit of the child. No form of corporal punishment is allowed at the school, nor will any member of staff suggest or sanction the use of corporal punishment by any other person.

If a child's behaviour becomes unduly disruptive or of danger to other students, and the child will not cooperate with the teacher's requests, removal from the class (to the care of another teacher) for the remainder of the lesson or day may occur. In this case the teacher will contact the parent that afternoon or evening to discuss the problem, and also complete an incident report indicating what has happened and what course of action has been decided on.

Should the problem continue the teacher will meet with the parents, together with the child if both parties feel that is appropriate, to agree on a further course of action. If there is no improvement in the child's behaviour a further meeting will be called at which another (senior) staff member acceptable to the parent(s) will be present to help clarify and overcome the problem. At this stage the parent(s) are to be made aware that if the behaviour cannot be modified within an acceptable time frame the student will be suspended (i.e. not permitted to attend at school) for up to one week. A student may also be suspended for other serious offences such as wilful damage to property, abusive behaviour, possession or use of tobacco, alcohol or any prohibited substance. Every attempt will be made at this time to resolve the problem through parent-teacher liaison.

At any time during this process, if the parent(s) feel there are issues they cannot raise with the class teacher, or that they are in conflict with the class teacher, they are welcome to raise the matter with a senior member of staff whom they feel comfortable to approach. This staff member can mediate between the parent(s) and class teacher. The parent(s) may also be supported by a person who they feel can assist them.

If, on the student's return to classes a satisfactory improvement in behaviour is not evinced he or she can be expelled, i.e. have their enrolment at the school cancelled. In such a case the student and parent (s) may request a meeting with the School's Board of Directors to review and reconsider the decision.

Ultimately, as it is the teacher who has a responsibility and duty of care to the class, the teacher has the right to refuse to have a child in the class if the child's presence prevents them from effectively fulfilling their obligations as a teacher. This is particularly important if the teacher has cause to believe that the child will not obey directions from the teacher outside the classroom situation. Class outings and camps are an integral and compulsory part of the school programme, and as the risks and potential consequences are much greater in these circumstances a teacher will not take a child off the school grounds if they pose an unacceptable risk. This could ultimately preclude the child from continuing at the school.

5. School Requirements

A child is enrolled in the school on the understanding that the child's class teacher and parent(s) will work together for the balanced development of the child. The teacher is available (within reason) to be contacted by the parent(s) when they feel the need to do so, and in return the parent(s) agree to support the following guidelines:

Punctuality

Students are to arrive at school no earlier than 8.15am unless a prior arrangement has been made, and no later than 8.40am. If your child arrives late, please accompany them to the office and they will be taken to their classroom.

Attendance

An important aspect of Steiner education is the continuity of lesson content and social interaction from one day to the next. A low rate of absenteeism is vital to the children's progress and the class.

Students are expected to attend to the last day of each school term, and to participate in class performances and other activities which may take place in the evening or on weekends. Class camps are an integral and compulsory part of the School's programme. It is important for each child, and the continuity within the class, that holidays are not taken during term time. There are 2-3 weeks of scheduled holidays in addition to State school holidays each year.

If your child will be absent please phone the school before 8.40am to alleviate concerns regarding missed connections etc. It is a legal requirement that when the child returns to school the class teacher receives a note explaining the absence.

Daily Transport

Kindergarten children are to be brought to school and collected from school by a parent or adult known to the child, as train and bus travel are generally unsuitable for this age. Either car park may be used for set-down in the morning. For pick up in the afternoon please use the car park near the soccer field so as to keep the bus turning/waiting area clear. Buses are available to most regions and a bus connects to the East Maitland railway station. Kindergarten finishes at 2.30pm, the other classes at 2.40pm.

School Outings

School outings which involve an additional cost will be notified beforehand, however impromptu class outings for sporting, recreational or cultural purposes (without prior notification) are a normal occurrence. This may involve use of the school's bus(es) or public transport.

Access to electronic games and media

Especially in the primary years, many behavioural, social and learning difficulties can be contributed to or exacerbated by exposure to electronic games and media. Such exposure is counter productive to the effectiveness that Steiner education strives for and parents are expected to work with the teacher in monitoring and restricting this access.

Phones and electronic entertainment devices are prohibited at School and if confiscated will be returned only to the parent.

Parent and students are asked to be mindful of privacy and ethical considerations when using electronic communications and social networking sites. No photos or video clips associated with school activities may be used without the express permission of every person featured in the images/video, and then only for private purposes, unless sanctioned by the school. The use of electronic media to transmit material which may denigrate, be offensive or upsetting to another member of the school community is not acceptable.

Food

Diet has an important effect on a child's well being through the day. Apart from occasional class fund-raising activities there is no school canteen, and parents are asked to provide a nutritious morning tea and lunch for their child. Sweets, soft drinks, crisps and other packaged treats and snacks are not permitted.

Clothing, hair and jewellery

There is no school uniform, however appearance needs to be neat and within the following guidelines, formulated for the protection of students and to reflect a working environment where there is allowance for individuality without appearance becoming a point of focus. The School reserves the right to determine whether or not a student's appearance is acceptable at school/school activities.

Clothing needs to be comfortable for work and play, in good repair and free from writing, advertising, motifs etc. Tops must be long enough to overlap pants/skirts.

Black clothing, singlet tops and make up are not permitted.

Children need a wide-brimmed hat in their bag all year round.

Shoes need to be comfortable for walking; thongs, scuffs and high heels are not permitted. Sturdy filled-in shoes are required for some craft and science lessons.

Jewellery - Earrings are restricted to small sleepers or studs. No body piercing or tattoos are acceptable. Other jewellery is not permitted, however this may be relaxed for later secondary years at the teachers' discretion.

Hair - Exaggerated hairstyles are not acceptable – including dreadlocks and cuts shorter than No 3. Bleached or coloured hair is not allowed: if a child arrives with dyed hair they will be required to stay away from school until the hair is restored to its natural colour.

Fees

Fees are kept as low as possible and incorporate most materials used by the students, but do not include camp and some outing costs.

The school also operates a building fund to help finance new facilities and refurbishment of existing buildings. Donations to this fund are tax-deductible. Any such donations help keep borrowing costs and fees down, and would be greatly appreciated.

Fees are due one week prior to the commencement of term and must be paid in advance unless prior arrangement has been made.

Fees are non-refundable. Continuing enrolment is conditional on all fees being finalised by the end of each term.

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a full term's notice is required if a student is ceasing to be enrolled at the school, otherwise the parent(s) are liable for payment of the following term's fees.

A separate note will advise of fees and term dates.

6. Complaints & Grievances

The school values an ongoing good relationship with parents, & welcomes feedback on the school's operation.

It is important that any complaint or grievance is addressed & every effort made to resolve it to the satisfaction of both parties.

Issues relating to a parent's child should be taken up with the class teacher. If the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily with the class teacher, the parent(s) are welcome to arrange a meeting with the principal or a senior member of staff who will work towards an acceptable outcome & follow up after an appropriate interval. Parents may bring a support person with them to any such meeting.

Issues relating to administrative matters or the school in general should be brought to the Principal who will endeavour to resolve them.

If a mutually acceptable resolution cannot be reached, the parent(s) may: -

- (i) address a letter to the School's Board of Directors who have ultimate responsibility for the school. They will review the matter & the school's position, take any appropriate action, & advise the parent(s) of their determination; or
- (ii) contact the Board of Studies Hunter Liaison Officer (or other relevant authority) if they believe the School is in breach of law.