



**Silver Tree**  
STEINER SCHOOL

## **Early Childhood Handbook**

***“The Kindergarten years, [the years before formal schooling] are the most important of all in the education of the child. It is absolutely essential that before we begin to think, before we so much as begin to set our thinking in motion, we experience the condition of wonder.”***

***Rudolf Steiner***

Dear Parents,

The years prior to formal schooling are the formative years that are a bridge between home and primary education working with the principles and philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. We strive to create an environment where the imagination, creativity and inner-will of your child will flourish.

Until the age of seven, children learn primarily through imitation. With this in mind, our programs aim to create a warm and loving homelike environment with rhythmic repetition where children feel comfortable and secure.

Our days consists of a flow of physical, social and artistic activities. Children have the opportunity to enjoy domestic tasks such as baking, washing and gardening. This participation enables the child to imitate purposeful adult work and be involved in real life activities.

We strive to provide an education that maintains a dream-like quality, deepening the child’s innate sense of wonder, and developing an awareness of the world through play, which is the foundation of formal education. If they experience beauty, goodness and truth in their activities and surroundings, they will grow with a sense of quality in all they do. Thank you for entrusting your child into our care.

### ***The Early Childhood Teachers***

*(This booklet is a supplement to the Silver Tree Steiner School Parent Handbook.)*

***“If a child has been able to play,  
To give up their whole living being to the world around them,  
They will be able in the serious tasks of later life,  
To devote themselves with confidence and power,  
To service the world.”***

***Rudolph Steiner***

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## CHECKLIST FOR BEGINNING KINDERGARTEN

To fully enjoy our program, your child will require the following items:

### ALL CHILDREN

- \* Clothing
  - Plain comfortable clothes as per Dress Code in the *School Handbook*.
  - Small school bag, with no advertising or TV characters. These can be purchased from the School Shop. Please clearly label with your child's name.
  - Hat – legionnaire or wide brimmed – these can be purchased at any uniform store or at the School Shop. These can be left at school. Please clearly label with your child's name.
  - Covered shoes with good grip for outside play (NO Crocs or thongs). Velcro shoes are ideal as the children are more able to put these on and take them off by themselves.
  - Spare clothes. Please pack at least two full sets of spare clothes for your child every day, including underwear and socks.
  - In winter, please provide soft soled, slip-on, plain indoor shoes. These are of your own choice, but if required, can be ordered through Sun Shadow Slippers at [www.sunshadowslippers.com.au](http://www.sunshadowslippers.com.au).
  - In winter, please ensure your child wears multiple layers of warm clothing including singlets and warm socks.
  - In winter, please ensure your child has a pair of gum boots and raincoat to wear outside in the wet weather.

### FULL DAY CHILDREN ONLY

- \* Lunch - Children who stay until 3.15pm (Rainbow children and Kindy Care children) need to bring a healthy lunch from home. A zippered and insulated lunch bag (again, with no advertising or TV characters) to store lunch in, which will keep their food fresh and ant-free. *Lunch boxes are stored inside but are not refrigerated – please pack ice-packs as appropriate.*

ALL ITEMS MUST BE CLEARLY LABELLED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.

## ATTENDANCE HOURS

The children's school day begins at 8.30am. It is very important that children are on time. Prior to the doors opening we ask that your child and their siblings wait quietly with you. Please respect that prior to 8:30, the teacher is involved in vital preparation time.

### ARRIVAL

Adults should only leave once the Kindergarten Teacher is present.

*Punctuality* - Please be punctual as it can be very disturbing for some children to arrive late and feel that everyone else has started without them. Help your child to settle in and then leave with a confident goodbye.

## SETTLING IN

The first week of school can be an anxious time for both the parent and child. We try to make this transition away from home as gentle and positive as possible. With this in mind we offer a few suggestions and comments that you may find useful.

Children like order and routine so try to establish your school routine as quickly as possible.

- \* Give yourself plenty of time in the morning so your child does not feel rushed and unsettled.
- \* Say goodbye in a cheerful and loving way. Don't cling, however hard it may be. If you say "the last kiss", mean it.
- \* Please consider that your feelings and misgivings can interfere with your child's adjustment. Once you have made the decision that this is the school you would like your child to attend, be secure in the knowledge that you are leaving them in a safe and caring environment and show your child you are confident that s/he will have an enjoyable day and be happy.

All children need to feel secure and begin school with a positive experience to enable them to become successful learners. Even though we work with a strong daily rhythm that provides security and reduces anxiety, sometimes this is not enough for some children. If your child is unable to stay at Kindergarten without you, the teacher will suggest strategies to enable a successful separation to occur.

Due to the impact on your child and the rest of the group, if your child has not settled into Kindergarten successfully by the end of Term 1 without your presence, we will need to discuss if your child is ready to attend Kindergarten.

## DEPARTURES

Children will not be dismissed into the care of Primary school-aged children. Please collect your child on time as children can become distressed when they have to wait for parents. Please take your child's hand and walk with them to the car-park.

**Reminder: Playground equipment is not to be used before and after school. The area should be vacated promptly in the afternoons as staff need to prepare for next day set-up.**

## MESSAGES

Once the children have begun to arrive, the Kindergarten Teachers' time is devoted to the children and helping to set the mood for the day. If there is an urgent, very important message to pass on to your Kindergarten teacher in the morning, then please do so. However, if your message for your teachers is not urgent, please speak with the Kindergarten Assistant or Reception.

Teachers are available for appointments and these can be made with the office. Please read the newsletter to keep up to date with what is happening in the Kindergarten – you will find an “Early Childhood Chatter” section as well as the calendar of upcoming events. Please also check the Kindergarten notice boards regularly. Your Class Carer is also a great source of information.

Messages can be left at the School Office on 92954787. Absentees can be e-mailed to [welcome@silvertree.wa.edu.au](mailto:welcome@silvertree.wa.edu.au) or reported via the Schoolzine App.

## TELEVISION, MEDIA & THE YOUNG CHILD

It is our expectation that in keeping with the school’s low-technology ethos, that NO television is watched during the week.

Within Steiner Education, it is the imagination that provides the foundation for learning and growth. It is within the first seven years that children learn so much. They learn to walk, to speak, and experience the awakening of thinking as they grow from being babies to infants. Through play, children develop their knowledge of the way the world works, their relationships to others, their physical control and their imagination. Within Steiner Education, play is considered the ‘child’s work’ whereby the ‘learning processes’ occur naturally.

Children learn best through imitating other children and the adults around them.

Television watching places children into an unnatural passive state in which they are deprived of their true work, which is their play.

The presence of the television and other media in a child’s life is often clearly seen in the children’s play during the Kindergarten school years. The strong influence it has upon little children is visible in many ways. The child may speak in the tone of a certain character or machine. The child may seem “stuck” in their ideas of play e.g. imitating super heroes, monsters or Disney characters.

Current research shows that television watching adversely affects children’s thinking, speaking, imagination, senses, physique, feelings and behaviour. Television watching itself affects child development regardless of the program content. There are many well-documented studies demonstrating the effects of television on children. For example hyperactivity and lack of attention span or inability to complete tasks. Perhaps the greatest cost is the dimming effect it has on the child’s wonderful imagination.

To provide consistency between home and school, we encourage you to explore alternatives to television viewing such as meaningful activities that positively contribute to family life (cooking, washing dishes, and gardening etc). The teachers would be happy to share ideas or suggest other alternatives. Books on this subject is available in the parent library located in Reception School and articles and recent research is available from the Kindergarten teachers.

## COMPUTER USE & DVDS

Our views of the effects of television on the young child also extend to screen times, watching DVDs and playing computer games.

We recommend the following TED talk in relation to children and media:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoT7qH\\_uVNo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoT7qH_uVNo)

Useful websites can be found at:

Australian Council on Children and the Media: <http://childrenandmedia.org.au/>

Screen Free Parenting: <http://www.screenfreeparenting.com/>

Happy Families – Dr Justin Coulson - <https://www.happyfamilies.com.au/>

Maggie Dent - <https://www.maggiedent.com>

## MORE ABOUT LIFE WITHIN THE KINDERGARTEN ROOMS

*“If a child has been able to play, to give up his whole living being to the world around him, he will be able to, in the serious tasks of later life, devote himself with confidence and power to the service of the world.”* **Rudolf Steiner**

## RHYTHM

Children flourish when their daily activities are arranged rhythmically to reflect the natural order of life. Our program is organised with a sense of “breathing in” and “breathing out”, concentration and relaxation, individual and whole group experiences.

Each day has its own ‘rhythm’ that occurs within a weekly rhythm. The weekly rhythm finds its place within the larger rhythm of the year, and as such, we change our songs and rhymes and our eating menus to reflect these seasonal changes.

Each day has its own special activity, such as painting. This repetition allows for the development of a secure and nurturing atmosphere.

Just as children are nourished at school by the rhythm of each day, we encourage parents to establish set meal times and bed-time routines at home. Establishment of these rhythms provides stability and security for children in an otherwise busy world.

As difficult as it is in these modern times to establish routines, it is important for young children to go to bed at the same time every night. We recommend that this be no later than 7pm. Please feel free to contact your teacher if you would like some ideas for making this transition a successful one for parent and child.

## FOOD

As we endeavour to provide a nurturing environment for the children, we also purchase and prepare foods of a high nutritional standard. Grains in the kindergarten are organic and fruit and vegetables are as far as possible organic, spray-free and or locally produced.

Special needs are considered. If your child has allergies, please speak to your teacher with details. Due to the increasing prevalence of severe allergic reactions to peanuts, children must not bring any peanuts or peanut products (e.g. peanut butter) in their lunches.

- \* *Morning tea:* The Assistant and the children prepare this meal each day according to a weekly rhythm. The children do not need to bring anything from home for morning tea. The cost of this is already covered in the school fees.
- \* *Lunch for Rainbow (K6) & Kindy Care children:* - We encourage nutritious food from home. Wholemeal sandwiches, salads and fresh fruit are encouraged. Occasional home-baked treats are fine – as these are much healthier alternatives to “packaged treats” that you buy at a supermarket. We are a Waste-Wise school so we ask that no packaging is brought in lunch boxes. Instead of packing small pot-yoghurts, please buy a big pot and dispense into re-useable containers. Every possible reduction in plastic waste helps our environment. We have an array of alternatives to using plastic wrap available for purchase in the School Shop.

Muesli bars, fruit straps, roll ups, flavoured yoghurts and biscuits are high in sugar and considered **not suitable** for school lunches. No lollies, potato chips, or chocolate treats please. Any packaged and processed foods will be returned home unopened.

As rainwater is readily available at school, fruit juices are unnecessary. Children are reminded to drink water regularly particularly during the summer months. Children require zippered and insulated lunch bags to store sealed lunchboxes in. We have some available for purchase in the School Shop. These keep the children’s food fresh and ant-free.

## HEALTH

The teachers take a special interest in your child’s wellbeing. A nutritious diet contributes to well-being. It is normal however for children to experience illness as they grow. As parents, you know best when your child shows symptoms of illness. The lively school environment is often very demanding and beyond the capacity of a child who is unwell.

For fever, vomiting and diarrhea a rest day after they have recovered is necessary. The young child often appears well after illness, however, the body still needs full recovery. Please allow your child at least one full day of rest at home after illness in a quiet, restful environment until they are fully recovered.

Many childhood illnesses are contagious. Teachers must be informed if your child has contracted such an illness so the parent community can be notified. More information can be found in the *School Handbook*.

In an emergency, we will use the information you have provided regarding contact numbers, doctor’s details and specific instructions. It is essential that all contact details are kept updated in case of emergencies.

## PERSONAL HYGIENE

In the interests of personal hygiene all children starting Kindergarten must be toilet trained. This means that children must be able to recognise when and where to go to the toilet and be able to manage on their own.

As with all young children, accidents do occur occasionally. If these occur more than once a week a request may be made for the child to be kept at home until the child is ready to return.

## TOYS

**Home toys and books are not required at school and are best left at home.**

To enhance the child's natural sense of wonder and curiosity "special treasures" from nature are welcomed for our nature tables. Shells, feathers, nests, flowers, crystals etc awaken us to the changing seasons connecting the children to the beauty of their natural environment. Children are encouraged to bring in any beautiful treasures from nature, for us to admire together and display.

## CHILDREN'S WORK

Within the curriculum emphasis is placed on the process rather than the end product. Therefore, throughout the year the children's artwork is collected and kept in a portfolio. This will be given to the children at the end of year. The children's work (craft, drawing, paintings) is often shared at parent teacher nights or parents may view them by asking the teacher.

Written reports are provided for Rainbow children twice a year. We ask that parents do not share or discuss these with their child. Please see the School Handbook for further information.

## BEHAVIOUR

We strive to understand the nature of the young child and create a program that provides the security of a daily rhythm, an ordered environment and an appropriate balance of activities. These fundamental principles assist in promoting positive behaviour.

If however, we notice that your child's behaviour is not appropriate for kindergarten, we will use creative strategies to redirect the child. For example, they might spend some time helping one of the adults with a task, until they are ready to rejoin the group. Teachers reinforce ways of resolving issues among children by modelling positive examples of expected behaviour. Children are offered alternative activities when engaged in disruptive play.

If difficulties persist, a teacher may request an interview with the parents. Together the adults can then re-assess the situation to find ways for the child to express themselves in more socially appropriate ways. Please refer to the school's *Discipline Policy*.

Most importantly, good communication amongst adults is the most helpful approach for the children during these formative years. Parents can also be of assistance by sharing with their child's

teacher any changes at home (e.g. moving house, pet has died) that may result in unusual behaviour from their child. In cases of on-going disruptive behavior, parents may be requested to collect their child from school.

## PARENT PARTICIPATION

### BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The birthday celebration is a memorable occasion for your child and will be acknowledged at kindergarten with a birthday celebration which we invite parents to come along to. Please contact your child's teacher the week prior if they have not yet set a date for the birthday celebration with you.

### NATURE TABLE

Each room has a Nature Table that changes with the seasons, bringing a way for the children to note these natural changes. A small table or display space can be created at home with nature's treasures gathered from walks or outings.

### PARENT PARTICIPATION SCHEME

All parents of students at The Silver Tree are expected to participate in various projects at the school. The Parent Participation scheme is mandatory for every Silver Tree family, comprising of 10 hours per semester of voluntary participation.

Busy bees are held on the last Saturday of every holiday. There is an understanding that if parents are not available on that particular day they will make a point of finding another job to do at a time that suits them. If you are unable to participate in busy bees you may have a skill which is very valuable to the school – please remember to tell us about it!

PPS hours can be recorded via the Schoolzine App or website.

### KINDERGARTEN ROSTER

Help from parents is required each day in the Kindergarten. Please check the Kindergarten noticeboards for the roster and nominate a time you would like to participate in this support. In summer, we also appreciate help with watering the gardens. Of course, this time does go towards your PPS hours.

### BUSY BEES

On the last weekend of each holiday a Busy Bee is held. All parents are invited to participate and assist with improvement projects. The work includes: gardening, painting, tidying the grounds, minor landscaping and other improvement tasks. This is a good way to meet other families outside of school hours and complete your Parent Participation Hours. An e-mail will be sent to parents in the holiday with details of the busy bee.

## PARENT EDUCATION

## RESOURCES FOR PARENTS – LEARNING ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Suggested reading on Parenting and Steiner Education. You are welcome to borrow books from the parent library in Reception.

- \* You Are Your Child's First Teacher *Rahmina Baldwin*
- \* Work & Play in Early Childhood *Freya Jaffke*
- \* The Genius of Play *Sally Jenkinson*
- \* The Challenge of the Will *Margaret Meyerkort*
- \* Storytelling with Children *Nancy Mellon*
- \* The Hurried Child *David Elkind*
- \* The Waldorf Parenting Handbook *Cois Cusick*
- \* Free to Learn *Lynne Oldfield*
- \* Ready to Learn *Martyn Rawson & Michael Ros*
- \* Beyond the Rainbow Bridge *B Patterson and P Bradley*

**Further general information and resources about Steiner Education can be found at:**

<http://www.steinereducation.edu.au/>

## PARENT EDUCATION TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

To help parents grow in their understanding of what Steiner Education offers to both children and adults, talks and workshops are held throughout the year. These are always informative, thought provoking and life-enriching. Check the school newsletter for meeting dates and venues.

We welcome you and your family to the Silver Tree Community and we warmly encourage you to please speak to your Teacher, Teaching Assistant or the Office to clarify any questions you may have.

## CLASS DAYS AND TIMES

Name of Group	Age Group	Days	Times
Parent & Baby Group	Pre-natal to 2 years. Parent and child. Run by a Mothers' Group facilitator.	Attend once per week.	MORNINGS  Please consult office for current times and availability.
Playgroup	2 years to 4 years. Parent joins child with Playgroup Leader facilitating.	Attend one morning a week.	MORNINGS  Please consult office for current times and availability.
Kindy 4 (Woylies)	Children start at the beginning of the year in which they turn 4.	Attend two mornings per week:	Mon and Wed or Tue and Thurs:  8:30am - 12:30pm
Kindy 5 (Possums)	Children start at the beginning of the year in which they turn 5.	Attend four mornings per week:	Mon – Thurs:  8:30am - 12:30pm
Kindy Care	After- care for Kindy 4 and Kindy 5 children in a small, homely environment, facilitated by a kindy teacher.	Kindy care is available four afternoons per week, on the days your child attends Silver Tree only.	Mon – Wed: 12:30pm - 3:15pm  Thurs: 12:30pm - 2:15pm
Kindy 6 (Rainbows)	Children start at the beginning of the year they turn 6.	Attend four full days plus one half day per week:	Mon – Wed: 8:30am - 3:15pm Thurs: 8:30am - 2:15pm Fri: 8:30am- 12:30pm
Primary (Class 1 - 6)			Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri: 8:30am - 3:15pm Thurs: 8:30am - 2:15pm