DANDENONG RANGES
STEINER SCHOOL
PARENT HANDBOOK

Early Childhood Campus

Prep • Kindergarten • Playgroup

www.drss.vic.edu.au   (03) 8790 4797
Welcome to the Dandenong Ranges Steiner School Prep Class, Kindergarten and Playgroup. We extend a warm welcome to you and your family. The aim of this booklet is to provide you with information about our programs. We want you to feel an important part of our activity here, so please do not hesitate to ask if you have any questions at all.

### Playgroup

Many families start their school journey in our playgroup program. DRSS offers Playgroup to parents of children from birth to kinder age. Lead by experienced leaders, Playgroup is a chance for families to meet weekly in a warm, nurturing and healthy environment. Each playgroup follows a predictable rhythm, and includes activities such as cutting fruit or vegetables in preparation for morning tea, free play, parent craft or gardening, Morning Circle with seasonal songs and poems, group walk, and a short story at the end of the session. Playgroup sessions run Monday to Friday, from 9.30am to 11.30am. Afternoon sessions are introduced where necessary. Playgroups are held at the Early Childhood Campus in Menzies Creek.

Enrolment forms can be downloaded from the Parent Information page of our website or requested from the school office. Please contact the Office for further information. Contact details are at the back of this handbook.

### Kindergarten

It is a big step for both parent and child beginning kindergarten. Suddenly the door opens on a new world filled with new people and challenges. The kindergarten is a stepping-stone into that world. The teacher and assistant are there to help you begin. Warm cooking smells entice you. Happy faces and chattering children greet you and some children find a quiet corner from where they can watch for a little while before they ‘jump in’.

### Hours and Days of Operation

Big Kinder children are offered 15 hours of kindergarten per week and Little Kinder children are offered 1 three hour session and 1 two hour session per week.
Colours of the Week

Your child may like to wear the colours of the week when they come to kinder.
Monday – Blue/Violet
Tuesday – Red/Pink
Wednesday - Yellow
Thursday - Orange
Friday - Green

Rhythm Creating

A rhythm is central to the teacher’s work in the kindergarten. It helps the children to feel secure and nurtured. As the day unfolds, songs and verses mark the different activities. Rhythm brings discipline as the children find their own way from one activity to another. It is the framework of the day.

Kinder Morning Verse

The Earth is firm
Beneath my feet
The sun shines bright above
And here stand I
So straight and strong
All things to know and love.

A Day in the Kinder

As you come into the kinder, come in softly and help your children by guiding them to put their bag on their hook, take off their outside shoes and put on their slippers. It is important that you arrive on time at the kindergarten so your child is entering with other children and being welcomed into the morning as ‘one’. Play and more play is what it is all about. The assistant teacher will be busy preparing the food for morning tea at a table, and children may choose to help. The teacher usually greets your child, but sometimes the child just slips in almost unnoticed. A shy child often prefers it this way. Some children may ‘romp’ for a while before being redirected as the day gathers its rhythm.

Pick Up

When you pick up your children, please help them to put their slippers away and take home all their belongings. This is a great help to the teacher and encourages good habits.

Food

The children and teachers make the morning tea together. Biodynamic and organic food is used whenever possible. Each child’s special dietary needs are considered,
therefore if your child has allergies, please speak to his/her teacher. Children who stay for a full day bring their own lunch. A simple, wholesome sandwich and a small piece of fruit is fine. Some parents put an icepack in their child’s lunch box and we are also able to put lunches in the fridge if necessary. No sweets or packaged food please. We provide filtered water for the children to drink.

**Lunchtime Grace**

Earth who gives to us our food  
Sun who makes it ripe and good  
Dear Earth, dear Sun, by you we live  
Our loving thanks to you we give.

**Birthday Celebrations**

Children’s birthdays are very special events. We warmly welcome parents, grandparents and guardians to join us for the morning session on that day or soon after, and to bring a home-made cake to share. We honour your child and his/her place in our group with a simple ceremony and tell a Birthday story which, through engaging the imagination, describes an understandable picture of the human birth experience. Please contact your child’s teacher at least one full week before the birthday to discuss the details.

**Kindergarten Walks**

We love to go walking in our neighbourhood. Menzies Creek Station is so near we even hear the Puffing Billy whistle from the kinder. Monday is walk day. The children have the opportunity to stretch their limbs and to experience the changing seasons. In Autumn we gather leaves and acorns. In Winter we rug up for cold and windy weather. Spring finds us wearing daisy chains, and in Summer we have a ride with our parents on Puffing Billy to Emerald Lake Park. An excursion form is signed for our Monday walks at your interview at the beginning of the year. Parents are often invited to join us on our walks.

**Eurythmy**

Our eurythmy teacher takes the children for this art of movement, which helps children develop in a harmonious way. Please ask the teacher if you would like more information.

**Equipment & Resources**

We are often in need of fleece, plain coloured pieces of natural fibre cloth, interesting pieces of wood or bark, shells, feathers, seed-pods etc. If you can contribute to our collection of natural materials, please let us know.
Painting & Crafts

As play is our focus your child will not be bringing ‘things’ home every day. Most paintings and drawings will be kept until the end of term, however you are welcome to look at your child’s work at any time.

Individual Parent Interview

Before the new kinder and prep year begins we hold individual interviews for you and your child to get to know the workings of the rooms a little better. Parents will again meet the teacher and assistants and can discuss any individual concerns relating to their children or parts of the education and daily rhythm. Your child will be shown where their slippers, hand towel, lunch box, coat and sun hat will be kept.

When is Your Child Ready for Kinder?

Children are invited to join our Little Kinder Group when they are 3½ years old, but if your child’s birthday is in the latter part of the year, i.e. June to October you may decide to stay on longer at Playgroup and join us at mid-year.

The Kindergarten Teacher and assistants really enjoy meeting and getting to know your child in Little Kinder. This is a time when a special relationship is begun and forged with the teacher sometimes over a three-year period. Your trust in the teacher allows your child to have a special relationship with his/her first teacher, who will be another loving adult in his/her life. Before the new school year begins, you and your child will be invited to an orientation session in the kindergarten. Every year there are information evenings for new parents. Each year starts off slowly and for the first month of the year, children in kinder and prep do not attend morning sessions. This is to ease the children into their new routine. The fee charged per term is a yearly fee divided equally over four terms.

Children will need to bring

A bag with spare clothes in a plastic bag.
A sunhat with a wide brim or neck flap (not baseball caps please).
Lunch (if your child is in Big Kinder).
Slippers to keep at kinder for the year.
Sleeping sheet /pillow for Big Kinder children. (we will show you a design to make your own or there is a parent that makes these).
A coat for cooler/wet weather.
Gum boots for wet weather play.
The Prep Room

The prep year is a wonderful opportunity for your child and the class as a whole. Although it is quite similar to the kinder program, the prep year allows the children to develop new social, artistic and fine motor skills and also allows the class time to strengthen and mature before they continue their journey into Class One and begin their academic work.

Hours and Days of Operation

The prep is open Monday-Friday 9.00am -3.00pm. Your child will attend four out of the five days with approximately five different children having a rest day on each day. This system allows your child to transition into the longer hours of school and reduces the number of children in the classroom on any given day. Children commence the year gently, building up to the full program over a number of weeks.

The Focus of the Prep Year

The focus in the prep year is to provide the most appropriate environment for the children's development and to facilitate opportunities for learning through imitation - the natural means of learning in young children. Cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills are all afforded equal value and many different competencies are developed. Creative play and imitation of adult activities, through the role model provided by the teacher, are the focal point of the curriculum.

Children thrive physically and emotionally in the security of a predictable daily, weekly and seasonal rhythm. This rhythm will vary according to the needs of a specific group of children. Annual and seasonal rhythms, inspired by the seasonal festivals, with a special range of activities e.g. lantern-making for a Winter lantern walk. Individual birthdays are celebrated with a ceremony and a birthday cake. These strong lively rhythms help to give the children a deep sense of security.

Clothing
At the Early Childhood Campus

Children in their early years need us to help them to know when they are overly hot or cold. Warmth helps children stay healthy and allows their inner organs to grow. Cold contracts children so that they are unable to play. On cold days children need winter hats and raincoats. Gumboots are best for keeping feet dry. Children enjoy some outdoor play every day even when it is windy, cold and rainy. In the Summer children must have sun hats and protective clothing. For indoors each child needs a pair of plain slippers, which facilitate movement. Please keep a bag of spare clothes in the bottom of your child's bag. Children sometimes get wet or dirty in their play. Prep parents are asked to provide a pair of gumboots, a raincoat, winter hat and summer hat to stay in the classroom for the year. It is important to name
clothing and footwear so that we can make sure that nothing is lost. Many children, for example, have the same style of slippers. Sunny, happy colours suit children and we ask that children do not wear logos or black.

**Approach to Discipline**
**In the Kindergarten and Prep**

Discipline for the child in the kindergarten and prep classes requires learning to fit in with the group and to flow along with the planned activities. Mostly this happens through the rhythmical process of the session. Things are said or sung and done in the same way and at the same time. Co-operative and appropriate behaviour is modelled by the teacher and assistant. When a child is having difficulty joining in, hurts another child, or interrupts play, we look for an inner reason and try to accommodate that child. Sometimes however a child may need time out by sitting beside the teacher or doing an activity with the assistant.

We work together with parents. A teacher may request a discussion time with parents or make a home visit. Often, a home visit, by showing the child just how much the teacher cares, modifies behaviour. Children may be helped by change in diet or routine. Parents are asked to assist teachers by informing them of changes at home, which may affect behaviour. Good communication between teacher and parents is of the utmost importance. Parents are encouraged to request discussion times with teachers when they need clarification about any issue. The best time to approach a teacher about concerns is at the end of the day. A meeting time can then be planned to suit both the parent's and the teacher's schedules. In the morning teachers are focused on beginning the session and greeting children.

**Influences of Television**

Recent research shows that television watching adversely affects children's thinking, speaking, imagination, senses, physique, feelings and behaviour. It is important for parents to be aware of these facts. Some programs may be seen as appropriate for older classes. In general we discourage television watching and ask for your co-operation.

**Home Toys**
**In the Kindergarten and Prep Room**

A wonderful array of natural and age-appropriate toys is provided in the kindergarten and prep rooms. If children bring ‘home toys’ to kindergarten or prep, they may be damaged or broken. These toys will often be put aside for the day so as not to be damaged or interfere with the group’s natural play. We love to receive flowers or treasures for our nature table.
Health and Safety
In the Kindergarten and Prep Room

As parents, you know better than the teacher how your child appears and acts when he or she is ill. The lively kindergarten or prep rooms are not a soothing environment for a child who is unwell. Please make arrangements so that your child can be in a quiet and restful environment when he or she is unwell. All working parents know the desperate feeling of needing to go to work when a child is not feeling well. The teachers are very sympathetic with the situation, but we urge parents to arrange back-up childcare.

After an illness, children often appear healthy in the morning but are still not up to the vigorous activity of the kinder and prep day. Please allow your child at least one full day of rest after an illness. The teachers will make every effort to support you in keeping your child healthy. If your child is unwell or will be absent for other reasons, please call your teacher in the morning.

If your child has come into contact with an infectious disease, the school needs to be notified immediately. The school can inform you of the required exclusion periods. We ask parents to keep children at home for at least 48hrs after vomiting when they have been affected by the gastro virus. If your child becomes ill or sustains a substantial injury whilst at school, you will be notified immediately. If you cannot be contacted, the emergency person stated on your child's Confidential Enrolment Form (Kinder) or Family Data Collection Form (Prep) will be notified. Your signed consent will allow us to give the medical attention your child might need.

Immunisation

Parents are asked to provide details of the child's immunisation status. Prep children are required to provide a School Entry Immunisation Status Certificate. Please contact the Office for further information.

Absences

If your child is sick, on holidays or unable to attend, the school must be notified. This may be by phone, email or in writing.

Emergencies

Please ask your child's teacher if you would like to see our full Containment & Critical Incident Plan & Procedures. The School (Playgroup, Kindergarten, Prep and Primary) will close on days when the Fire Danger Rating is "Severe," "Extreme" or "Code Red."
In the event of a threat in the area, all children will be evacuated with their teacher. Please do not attempt to come into the area. Parents will be notified by SMS or telephone when it is safe to collect their child/ren.

**Evacuation and Fire Drill Policy and Procedures**

**Policy**

An emergency is any event, arising either internally or from an external source, which may adversely affect some or all of the occupants within this school and which requires an immediate response.

To ensure the likely types of emergencies that may occur at this school can be handled safely and effectively, DRSS will put into place the following EVACUATION DRILL practice:

- Notification to staff of a planned evacuation drill.
- Regular evacuation/fire drills. These will be planned to occur at different times of the day and week.
- Notify the school community of evacuation procedure by publication in Parent Handbooks and having the procedure available for perusal in each teaching space.
- Immediately after an evacuation drill, all Wardens shall attend a debriefing session and evaluate checklists. Where any deficiencies are noted, amendments shall be made to the Evacuation & Fire Drill Procedure and, if necessary, to the Containment & Critical Incident Plan.

**Procedure**

As staff may be required to self-manage incidents until such time as emergency services are able to respond, the following procedure is to be practiced to ensure the management of incidents safely and effectively.

In the event of an emergency or an evacuation an alarm will sound throughout the whole campus.

In an evacuation, the teacher must:

- Close the windows
- Retrieve Attendance Roll, Student Medications & Evacuation Pack
- Assemble class quietly and orderly
- Exit the room closing the door behind
- Playgroup Leader to check Community Room
- Kindergarten Teacher to check internal toilets
- Prep Teacher to check external toilets

All classes are to use designated exit points and then proceed to the assembly area in the prep room.

At the assembly point, the teacher must:

- Call Class Roll
- Immediately report unexplained absences to Chief Warden
• Remain at assembly point until all clear is given (On-Site Drill) or
• All class teachers will then move their class group of students in an orderly manner and accompany them onto waiting buses, beginning with playgroup through to prep.
• Chief Warden signals for buses to proceed in one movement off site to either **Fountain Gate Shopping Centre, Narre Warren** or **Wellington Park Shopping Centre, Rowville**. (Off-site Drill)
• Once in a safe area, the students must be kept within the defined area and not allowed to stray.

**Admission Requirements & Enrolment Procedure**

Please refer to the **Admissions Policy and Procedure** that you received in your **Information Pack**. This document is also available from the school office and can be accessed from the school website.

**Fee Policy & Schedule**

Please refer to our separate **Fee Policy** and **Fee Schedule** that you received in your **Information Pack**. This document is also available from the school office and can be accessed from the school website.

**School Community**

The Dandenong Ranges Steiner School is supported by a strong community of parents and like-minded people. There are many extra efforts being made by the DRSS community to support and enhance the children’s journey through the school. We encourage new and existing families to participate in some of the school's extensive community activities. It’s a great way to get to know other families and enjoy the vibrant community here at the school. Many jobs around the school are performed voluntarily and you are invited to participate and contribute wherever possible.

Working bees and fund-raising activities play an integral role in the running of our school. They help keep fees low and strengthen our community by involvement. If you have any skills you can offer, or access to relevant services, we would love to hear from you.

**Working Bees**

Working Bees are scheduled, up to four times per year, for parents to be involved in general maintenance, spring cleaning & special projects. At least one parent from each family is expected to attend at least two working bees per year. Families who are unable to fulfil this requirement will be asked to pay a Working Bee Levy.
addition to attending Working Bees, regular contributions to other Groups also qualify for withholding the working bee levy from your family’s account. Please note that a minimum of 10 hours work is required.

Publicity and Fundraising

The Dandenong Ranges Steiner School Publicity Group provides one of the many hands offered by parents to the school. Our objectives are to increase awareness and exposure of our school, with the intention of creating strong public identity, ultimately increasing enrolments. We endeavour to do this through practical means such as regular market stalls, library displays, website improvements and paid advertising. The Group has recently combined with the Fund-Raising Group and, in addition to the above, will oversee special fund-raising events as well as ongoing, smaller fund-raising activities.

Market Day

Each year, we hold at least one market. Our Market Day is a wonderful opportunity to become involved in our school community. This is one of our main fund-raisers.

Open Day

Our Open Day is intended to showcase the work of the students to the wider community. Students in the Primary Classes are required to be at school on Open Day.

Parent Library

In addition to the collection for students and a collection for teachers, we have a small Parent Library available to all families. It is housed in two locations - in the foyer outside the office and one in the Community Room at the Early Childhood Campus. You may borrow and return from either location. Anyone interested in helping with the management of these collections is welcome to contact the Librarian.

Communication

News Sheet

A fortnightly whole school News Sheet is circulated to all families and members of staff. It includes announcements from management and staff as well as community notices. It is automatically sent via email, and each family also receives a hard copy via their oldest child’s ‘pocket’ (see below), unless otherwise requested. Link: http://www.drss.vic.edu.au/news-and-events.html
Pockets

Kinder & prep children are allocated a ‘pocket’ where notices etc. are placed for collection by Parents. These are located outside the classroom. You may also use these pockets to leave notes for the Teacher or the Office, however we ask that they are not used for purposes unrelated to school. Playgroup children are not allocated pockets, however relevant notices may be found in the Playgroup room.

Noticeboards

Official DRSS notices are placed on the notice board outside prep room. There is a general noticeboard outside the Community Room.

Communication Procedure

We value and encourage open communication. Therefore, if you have any question at all about your child, the school or procedures, we ask that you bring it directly to the relevant person or group concerned. A copy of the Communication Policy, with details of how to bring a concern or grievance, is available from the Office. The College of Teachers is responsible for educational policy, curriculum and staffing. The Committee of Management is responsible for finances, regulations and operations.

Exit Interviews

Families who choose to withdraw their child are invited to attend an exit interview with the Bursar and/or their Teacher.

School Philosophy

The Dandenong Ranges Steiner School is a co-educational school conducted in accordance with the educational indications of Dr. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). This education is creative, artistic and academic, stimulating the imagination of the child, and thereby strengthening each child’s thinking, feeling and ability to do. By fully exploring the wealth of world wisdom from ancient times to our present age, the curriculum will resource children for the challenges of today, fostering a deep love of humanity and the world around them. Located within the Hills District, the Dandenong Ranges Steiner School offers a unique semi-rural setting. Underlying the school’s activity and focus is the integrity of the Bio Dynamic Gardening and Farming occurring on site.

Democratic Principles
The programs and teachings of the School support and promote the principles and practices of Australian democracy, including a commitment to elected Government, the rule of law, equal rights before the law, freedom of speech and association, and the values of openness and tolerance.

Administration

The Dandenong Ranges Steiner School Association is incorporated in Victoria with Consumer Affairs Victoria. The School is registered as an Independent School with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). It is also a member of Steiner Education Australia (SEA) and of Independent Schools Victoria (ISV). The kindergarten is registered as a Licensed Children's Service Centre with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Is also a member of the Australian Association for Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education. The Playgroup is a member of Playgroups Victoria.

The Committee of Management

The Committee of Management is comprised of two representatives elected from the membership of the Association, two representatives of the College of Teachers and up to two others appointed by the College of Teachers. The Committee is responsible for decisions regarding administration and co-ordination of the organisation, and management of community activity groups. Meetings are held fortnightly and are open to all interested families. The Chairperson must be notified of intention to attend.

Contact Details

Primary (Crystal Brook) Campus, postal address and contact details:
11c Duffys Road, Emerald VIC 3782
Phone 03 8790 4797
Fax 03 8790 4793
drss@ozemail.com.au
www.drss.vic.edu.au

Early Childhood Campus (not to be used as postal address)
51 School Road, Menzies Creek
Prep 03 5968 2630 (emergency and absence reports only)
Kinder 03 5968 2122 (emergency and absence reports only)

Updated July 2014