

SPECIAL CHARACTER STATEMENT

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

- Rudolf Steiner

1. Motueka Steiner School is a state-integrated school with closely associated kindergarten/ early childhood education centres, providing through its teaching and conduct education with a Special Character. The school's integration agreement states:

The school is a Rudolf Steiner Waldorf School in a farm setting in which Rudolf Steiner's Art of Education is practised with a special emphasis on respecting nature and caring practically for the environment. Anthroposophy, as a world-conception, its description of the universe and the human being, is the basis of the art of education and of all endeavours in the school.

This education, with its Special Character, includes the observance of festivals, which is Christian in its deepest sense, free of dogma or sectarianism.

The College of Teachers, which works collegially and in a spiritual way, shares responsibility for maintaining the Special Character of the school and the anthroposophical impulse which is inherent in all aspects of school life.

Integration must not jeopardize the education with a Special Character of the School. This agreement must be interpreted in a way that is consistent with the maintenance and preservation of this education with a Special Character.

2. This document describes the Special Character of the School in further detail and may be used in establishing parents/guardians' connection with the Special Character for enrolment purposes as required by the Integration Agreement.
3. The Steiner/Waldorf Special Character of the school is not confined to any single aspect of the school's activity. It is expressed in educational aims, curriculum content and teaching methods, organizational structures, festivals and celebrations, as well as in details of the social and physical environment of the school.
4. The Special Character of the School is based on the ideals and practices of education described by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), on the continuing research of Steiner/Waldorf teachers and other compatible pedagogical approaches, and their on-going development and adaptation to the unique context of Aotearoa New Zealand today.
5. Children are recognized as beings of body, soul, and spirit. Teachers carry a loving respect for the dignity and unique individuality of each child and seek to address the thinking, feeling, and doing aspects of each student. Curriculum delivery is linked to the developmental stages of the students with particular emphasis on age-appropriate content and method of teaching. The school therefore observes an unhurried, "learning in time, and over time" approach to the development of literacy and numeracy.

6. Waldorf education aims to support the development of the whole child and gives equal importance to nurturing physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects, requiring specific learning experiences to be brought to students at defined developmental stages. The active study and observation of children is at the heart of teacher development and of curriculum delivery. In addition to academic subjects the curriculum includes games, movement, art, drama, handwork, craft, and nature and farm-based activities.
7. Delivery of a Waldorf education and maintenance of the Special Character requires support and commitment from the families that make up the school community. The Special Character can only thrive where there is a commitment to shared values. Parents express their preference for a Waldorf education by supporting and reflecting the Special Character of the school in the home, supporting, and reflecting the College of Teachers' recommendations about the child's access to digital technology, caring for the school campus, participating in committees and working groups required to support the school, and by taking part in fairs and festivals.
8. The fundamental principles of Steiner/Waldorf education enable accessibility and adaptation to different ethnicities, cultures, and religions. Curriculum content allows for the exploration of a wide variety of cultural traditions and world views. Steiner/Waldorf education in Aotearoa New Zealand strives to imbue curricula with the unique spirit and history of this land and its peoples. We therefore celebrate the cultural richness and diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand. Our education embraces and honours Aotearoa New Zealand's bi-cultural heritage and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and considers all human beings to be free and equal in dignity and rights.
9. The school is a member of Steiner Education Aotearoa New Zealand (SEANZ), the national body for Steiner kindergarten and school education, and is a part of the international Waldorf school movement. There are currently over 1 200 Steiner/ Waldorf schools in 64 different countries and nearly 2 000 Early Years settings in more than 70 countries. Nurturing and implementing the Special Character of the school draws on this deep well of global anthroposophical practice.
10. Further information relevant to the Special Character of the school can be found in the Parent Handbook, the Essential Principles of Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Steiner Education Aotearoa New Zealand Curriculum Guidelines, the kindergarten philosophy statement, and associated bibliographical materials available from the school.

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