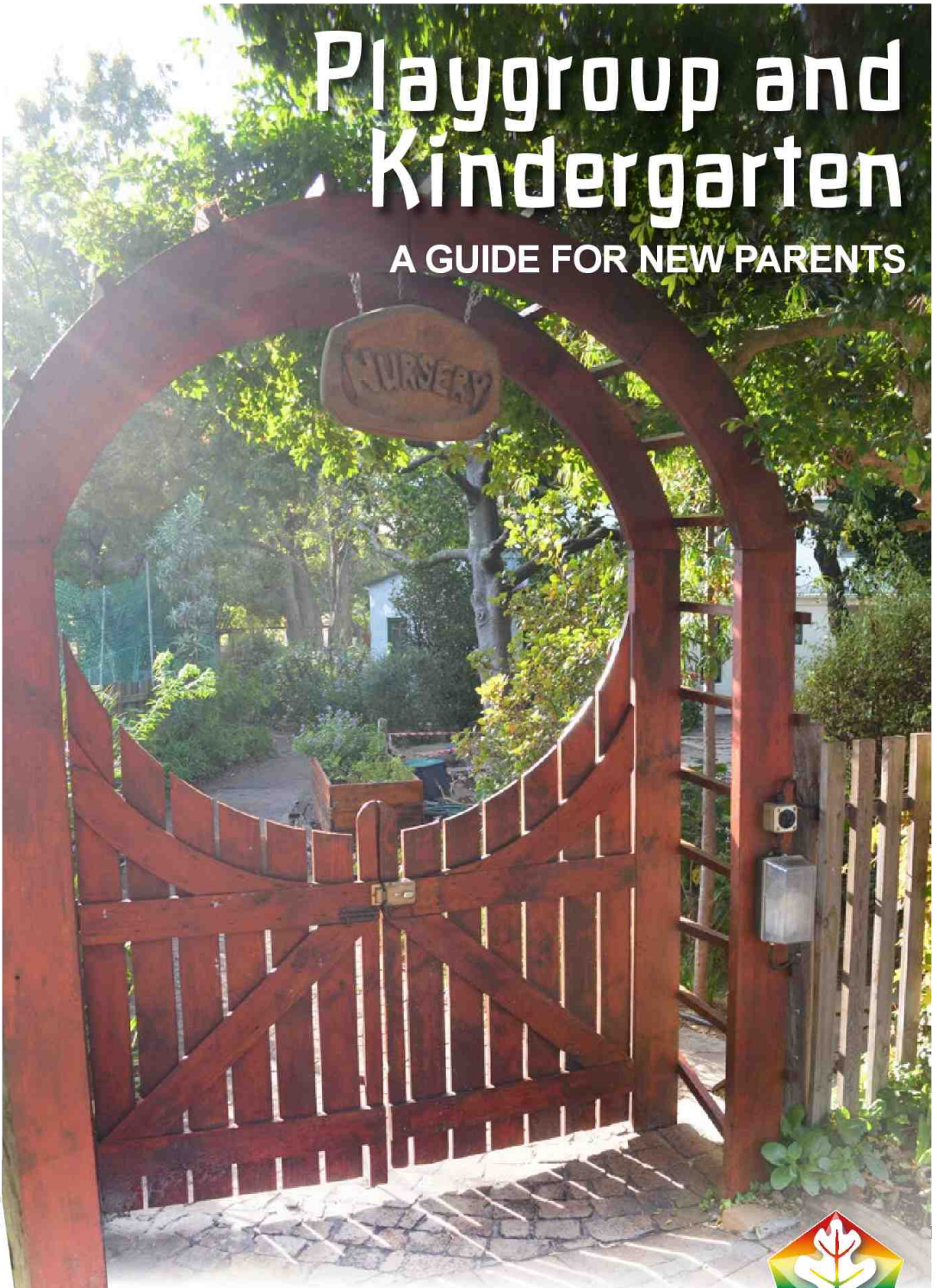
Playgroup and Kindergarten

A GUIDE FOR NEW PARENTS



Michael Oak Waldorf School

We are delighted to welcome you and your child to our Playgroup and Kindergarten. Here we offer a bridge between the quiet heart of the home and the broad open spaces of the school and life to come.

In our beautiful Playgroup and Kindergarten the children grow in a secure, caring homely environment, surrounded by quality toys and materials which allow the children to develop physical and social skills and creative impulses together with imagination and fantasy – which all help to form a foundation for a healthy life.

As well as a place for your child to make new friends, we hope that you will also make new friends. *WELCOME!*







CONTACTING THE TEACHERS

Playgroup

Alison Tobler 076 141 4923

Kindergarten teachers

Kathy Abbott 084 299 5836
Nicole Sparks 072 447 2544
Anne-Marié Winkelman 082 885 0624

Aftercare Supervisor

Hazel Melento 073 919 3959

Michael Oak Waldorf School
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Tel: 021 797 9728
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Email: info@michaeloak.org.za
Web: www.michaeloak.org.za

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL EACH DAY

Your child should bring the following:

- A school bag big enough for lunch box, shoes, jersey etc. Backpacks are good.
- A sun hat to be left in the classroom. Without this he/she will not be allowed to play outside. The school has a policy of "no hat, no play". Sun cream is to be applied at home. *See Clothing Policy*.
- A change of clothing in a plastic bag. This is very important, as accidents happen and the children sometimes get very wet in playing with water and mud.
- Snack time: *See Food Policy.*
- Toys: Plastic toys, cars, Barbies, monsters, cards etc. are not in keeping with a Waldorf Kindergarten and should be left at home.
- No T-shirts with characters printed on them. *See Clothing Policy.*

Please label all belongings with your child's name!



THE DAILY ROUTINE

We start at 08h00 every morning and the Playgroup finishes at 12h15, while the Kindergarten finishes at 12h30. To accommodate working parents, the Nursery door will be unlocked at 07h50. Should you need to rush off earlier, please arrange with another parent to keep an eye on your child until the door is opened. Each class has a similar routine during the morning. The child is welcomed into the room by the teacher.

Handwork:

The only time we do different activities that distinguish the children's different ages is during handwork. This is because their fine motor skills are at such different levels of maturity. We therefore do different handwork with the older and younger children on alternate days in the Kindergarten. On the days the children do not do handwork they play quietly and creatively inside.



Outside Time & Snack Time:

After handwork and snack time it is time for the children to go outside – to play, run, climb, skip, dig in the sandpits, climb trees or work in the garden. This is a time to test their physical limits, stretch limbs and develop new skills.

Ring Time:

At ring time we make a circle together, and through songs, poems, finger plays and ring games, joyfully experience our bodies, the seasons, the animals and people that make up our world. The repeated ring time aids the children's memory as they sing, act and move each day, the songs becoming favourites, which are sung at school and at home.

Activity Time:

Activity time follows, and we work together making bread, doing crafts using seasonal materials (to be played with, used, hung around the room or taken home to be enjoyed by the family). We draw, paint, and model with clay or beeswax and many more activities. It is a lively enjoyable time where the children have the opportunity to develop many skills.

Snack Time:

At mid-morning, after we have washed our hands, we sit down and eat together (at a table set with care). We say a 'thank you' together for our food; we listen and are heard in a social gathering. *See Food Policy.*



Eurythmy:

Eurythmy is enjoyed by all when we are visited once a week by a trained eurythmist. The lesson is accompanied by a musician.

Tidy Time:

At the end of a morning's play our classroom has to be cleaned, tidied and everything put in its rightful place before play can begin anew the next day.



Story Time:

The morning ends with a story told by the teacher where the children listen and fill their imaginations with pictures of the seasonal story, folk or fairy tale. The stories are often repeated so that they are first an adventure and then become a gift for the child's growing soul.

Home Time:

At home time the child is handed back into the care of the parent or the After Care teacher, with perhaps a quick word about the child's day. The child is reassured by the recurring rhythm of the day, the week and the year through repetition of seasonal activities, festivals and songs. The structure and security of the Playgroup and Kindergarten form the basis for deep confidence, a bridge between the home and the busy world outside, and form a foundation for a healthy social adult life.

MORE ABOUT OUR PLAYGROUP AND KINDERGARTEN

Age Groups

We have one Playgroup (3-year-olds turning 4 during the year) and three parallel Kindergarten classes (for children turning 5 and 6 during the year). If a child's birthday is in October, November or December, the faculty will carefully consider the child's readiness for Class 1.

Staff

Our Staff consists of 4 teachers, a full-time assistant in the Playgroup and two full time Kindergarten assistants. We also have a gardener who makes sure the playgrounds are safe and beautiful, and 2 domestic staff to clean and tidy the classrooms in the afternoons.

Introducing New Children and Parents to the Kindergarten

In Kindergarten parents are welcome to settle their children in on the first few days, but must leave by 8:30.

Bringing and Collecting Children

We start at 08h00 every morning and the Playgroup finishes at 12h15, while the Kindergarten finishes at 12h30. We find it important to start the day properly with a direct greeting to the child. Children must be collected by a parent or by a named person with parental consent. If this changes, you must inform your child's teacher in the morning, or phone the office with a message during the morning.

Punctuality

Parents are responsible for the children before and after school hours.

When a child arrives late in the morning, he/she may then find it difficult to settle and the rhythm of the day will also have been disrupted, for that child and the others. Parents are requested to make every effort to ensure their children arrive at school on time. It is also important to collect your child punctually at home time. It can be upsetting for children to be left behind after their friends have already gone, and also the teachers often have other meetings to attend, and cannot stay to supervise.

Dress

Parents are asked to dress their children in practical clothes and shoes appropriate to the season's needs and to the wear and tear of the classroom. *See Clothing Policy*.

Food

We ask that the mid-morning snack that you provide for your child is healthy and nutritious. *See Food Policy*.

Toys

Toys should not be brought to School without the permission of the teacher. These can easily be left behind and get lost, broken or cause a distraction in the class, which may be distressing for the child.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are very special in the Playgroup and Kindergarten where they are celebrated as individual festivals helping to create for the child a picture of their own life. Parents are invited to bring a cake and share in a special story and celebration.

Monitoring Children's Progress

We monitor your child's progress in order to be aware of his or her needs, providing continuous support whilst at our Playgroup and Kindergarten. We are available to discuss your child's progress and development and provide opportunity for parent feedback sessions. Parents will be kept fully informed of their child's activities, any medical problems, behavioural problems or other significant events.

Transition to the Primary School

We make every effort to announce the name of the Class One teacher in good time. He or she always spends time in the classes to observe the children and so that they can become familiar with their new teacher. We also take the older children to visit the Class One classroom during the last few days of the year. We do our best to ensure that the transition is a joyful and much anticipated experience.



Absence from Playgroup and Kindergarten

Phone the school office (021 797 9728) or WhatsApp 084 915 4415 as early as possible on the day that your child cannot attend. Absences for reasons other than illness are strongly discouraged, as they interrupt individual children's education and disturb the rhythm of the class. Parents who wish to take their children away from school for more than 3 days, for holidays or other reasons, must write to the College of Teachers to inform them in advance. Please note that fees will still be charged, and unauthorised absences have to be recorded.

Sickness

Please do not bring your child to school if they are unwell, and allow 36 hours to pass after a high temperature, diarrhoea or vomiting has abated before they come back to school. If in doubt, please check with the staff.

Accidents

Minor accidents are dealt with in the Playgroup and Kindergarten and homeopathic remedies are dispensed. In more serious cases accidents are recorded and parents informed of the measures taken to ensure the well-being of the child which could include phoning the parent.

Flowers

We appreciate it if the parents bring fresh flowers. The classrooms are always in need of fresh flowers. The teachers will put up a class roster so each family will have a chance to bring a bunch of flowers.

Appointments

The teachers are always happy to speak to the parents, but ask that you please arrange meetings in advance for after school. Before school and during the morning the teachers are there for the children, and conversations with parents are a distraction for both the child and the teacher. If there is something urgent to share with the teacher, a quick word or note is sufficient. An exception would be a quick whisper in the teachers ear if the child has been unwell or had a bad night.

Telephone Contact during the morning

- The teachers are usually available to speak to the parents at school each day after 1pm.
- In case of emergency please ring the office and leave a message.

Fees

The school requires a terms notice in writing if you wish to withdraw your child from Michael Oak, otherwise you are liable for payment of fees and will be charged accordingly. The school requires payment of full fees during any leave of absence – i.e. places cannot be 'held' for a child on extended leave without payment of fees.

After Care (Refer to After Care in the Guidelines Booklet)

WHAT IS EURYTHMY?

Eurythmy as a subject is part of the Waldorf School curriculum from Playgroup through to the 11th class. It is a form of artistic and therapeutic movement unique to Waldorf schools. Playgroup and Kindergarten children are led, through imitation, into forming gestures that bring fairy tales and nature stories into dynamic movement. These movements are specifically to support the physical and psychological well-being of the child and to bring about a harmony between the two.

Eurythmy requires that we become inwardly mobile. When we hear sounds, we are taken along into continuous change, from high to low, from soft to loud. We are also carried along on the course of a rhythm, in changes of rhythm and melodic moods and in the subtleties of spoken language. In Eurythmy these changes and their related inner movements are made manifest by movements of the body. This is done both individually and in groups. In doing Eurythmy the body becomes an instrument, visualising what otherwise is only audible, namely music and speech.



THERAPIES OFFERED

For those children who may be experiencing particular social, learning or developmental problems we offer assistance from fully qualified therapists in the following disciplines. We always discuss this with parents first. If therapy is recommended, parents are expected to act on the recommendation, or discuss their alternatives with the teacher.

Eurythmy Therapy

Eurythmy therapy may be used to help a child with developmental problems. Specific exercises are given to individual children to help them with their physical and inner development. We have a qualified Eurythmy therapist who practises at our school and so takes children during the morning for therapy should it be recommended.

Therapeutic Art

This is a Waldorf Art therapy and although the Kindergarten children are usually too young for this kind of therapy there are some instances where it is suggested. We have an art therapist who practices at our school.





A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Partnership with Parents

We aim to establish good relations with parents and provide a focus for teacher-to-parent support, parent-to-teacher support and parent-to-parent support. In order to foster a link between the child's home and school we ask to be invited to your homes for lunch or tea at least once during your child's stay in the Kindergarten.

Parent Participation

We like to include the parents as well as children in our work and parent participation is important in our Playgroup and Kindergarten, whether in helping with craft in the mornings, or helping transport children on outings. We hope to enjoy your family's company in celebrating our seasonal festivals. There is a weekly Michael Oak electronic newsletter every Friday. The Leaflet includes announcements, news, an interesting editorial and a diary of events for Michael Oak – please make sure you read it to keep up to date. Smalls advertisements may be placed by parents – contact the office staff for details.

To subscribe to The Leaflet, please email:
cabbott@michaeloak.org.za

We hope that families will find a community around the Playgroup and Kindergarten in which they can grow and make many new friends.



The Running of Michael Oak Waldorf School

The school is run by two groups, the Board of Trustees and the College of Teachers. The Board of Trustees includes elected parents and teachers and meets monthly to deal with financial and legal matters pertaining to the school. Most Waldorf schools worldwide work on a non-hierarchical basis and thus do not have a principal. The issues normally dealt with by a headmaster are handled by the College of Teachers, a group of teachers which meets every Thursday afternoon. Any teacher may join the College, provided they have taught at the school for one year. There is a holding slot in the office for College correspondence, should you need to communicate with them, or you can send an email to info@michaeloak.org.za for the attention of the College of Teachers.





Links

Each class has a parent or parents (Links) who act as liaison between parents and teacher, help to organise class events, fundraising and fair activities and act as a communication channel for the class family. They meet as a group once or twice a term.

Parents' Evenings

We look forward to seeing you at our termly parents' evenings, which foster a closer understanding between the home and the education which your child receives. The evenings take the form of a talk / discussion on various aspects of your child's education, and are also an opportunity for you to talk to other parents and your class teacher, hear what your children have been doing and see a display of their work.

Parking

Please respect the parking facilities and residents of Marlow Road by parking carefully in the road or in Abingdon or Bolus Road and walking the short distance to the Playgroup and Kindergarten. Please also consider whether you are causing an obstruction or blocking somebody's entrance – it only takes a moment's thought. Parents are asked to drive up Abingdon Road and down Marlow Road in our "unofficial" one-way system to ease traffic congestion.

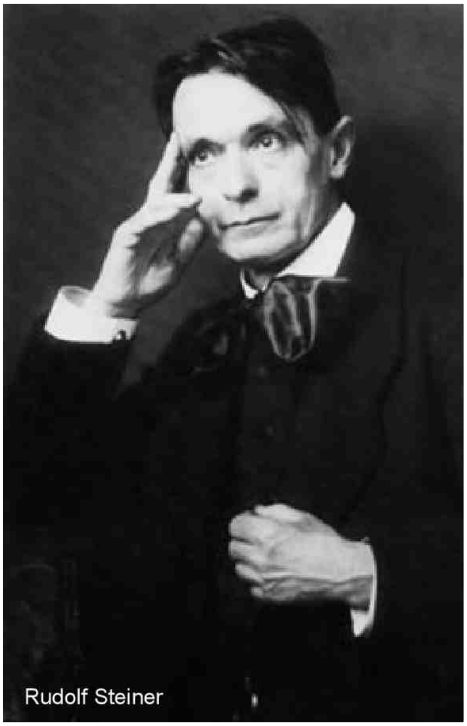


A BRIEF BACKGROUND TO OUR APPROACH

The Steiner ideal in the early years

The Austrian philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner wished to create a form of education which would help pupils achieve clarity of thought, sensitivity of feeling and strength of will. After listening to his lectures, the workers at the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart asked him to form a school for their children and in 1919 the first Waldorf School was founded.

The educational philosophy springs from the recognition of three seven-year cycles of development: from birth to seven, from seven to fourteen and from fourteen to twenty one. At each stage the education is designed to work with the unfolding abilities and changing needs of the child. These stages connect with the development of the all-round human qualities of thinking, feeling, and willing. In the first phase the active (or will) aspect predominates, in the second the affective (or feeling), and in the third the cognitive (thinking).


Rudolf Steiner

Each day in our Kindergarten classes, some time is dedicated to free creative play. Studies demonstrate that children who play well show more empathy towards others and have less aggression; are able to see things from the perspective of the other, and show less signs of fear, sadness and fatigue. Play also strengthens the imagination. Through play children are able to exercise and consolidate their ability to understand and think and to develop and strengthen their concentration. Creative play supports physical, emotional and social development and allows children to learn through investigation, exploration and discovery. It encourages children to become inventive and adaptable.

We are a community of 'doers' and our work is a combination of practical and artistic activity. We garden, clean, cook, and we bake our own bread together. Children love to help and develop a wide range of motor skills. To see an adult at work, in which care, skill, concentration and perseverance are all demanded, is a wonderful example to the ever-watchful child – a lesson in the sustained application of willpower. Implicit in everything we do but also in how we do it is the value base of the teacher. How we handle our tools and materials, even our gestures and body language, are all registered and internalised by the child.

The teacher, who sets the example, may then have certain expectations of the children. A variety of songs, stories and poems including verses in Afrikaans and Xhosa are learnt naturally by 'heart', not 'head'. Our children develop good memories, which do not depend on the printed word.

In a secure environment, children speak freely and learn to listen to others. We concentrate on the oral tradition by telling many stories. A well told story creates an appreciation for the human





voice and the beauty and rhythms of language. It also helps to extend vocabulary and aids the development of a good memory and a rich imagination. Fairy tales and nature stories address the feeling realm and awaken a fine moral sense. Puppet shows by the teachers and children develop dramatic skills through narrative and dialogue. Children also sing together, and take part in eurythmy: movement which works with language and music.

Waldorf Kindergartens identify rhythm as an important educational principle. Children need the reassurance of continuity and regular events punctuate the Kindergarten year, week and day. Seasonal activities celebrate the cycles of the year. The seasonal area reflects the changing natural world throughout the year, as do the themes of our songs, stories and poems. Each week has its own regular rhythm of recurring activities: baking day, painting day, drawing day and modelling day.

Every day has its own smaller rhythms. These help the child to feel secure and to know what to expect. The day is structured so that there is a varied pace with periods of contraction and expansion providing a balance between times of activity and times of rest. Celebrating a variety of festivals together provides an opportunity for rich cultural and religious experiences and involves the wider community.

Repetition also plays a key role in establishing continuity and aids the development of memory which is strengthened by recurring experiences. Daily, weekly and yearly events are remembered, and eagerly anticipated a second time round and stories are told not just once, but many times. Repetition brings the opportunity for children to familiarise themselves with the material and to deepen their relationship to it.

We believe that children whose needs are met, who are valued and not hurried through their childhood, are more likely to become well-adjusted adults who succeed in life and are able to contribute to society.

CLOTHING POLICY (Refer to the Playgroup and Kindergarten Policy Booklet)

FOOD POLICY (Refer to the Playgroup and Kindergarten Policy Booklet)

LIBRARY AND RECOMMENDED READING

We have a selection of books on subjects ranging from Steiner Education to Festivals, Crafts, Seasonal Activities, and Child Health etc. in the Parents Library which is situated in the bookshelf in the Kindergarten foyer. Please ask your class teacher to unlock it for you.











PLAYGROUP & KINDERGARTEN POLICIES

This contains policies that are particular to Playgroup and Kindergarten. Please view the full set of Michael Oak policies on the website at *www.michaeloak.org.za/policies*

FOOD POLICY

Our food policy is based upon mindfulness of the needs of the young child's developing being.

The creation of this policy has come from many years of experience, where teachers can vouch for the fact that home packed lunches need to support practical classroom management as well as enable easy and independent handling and management by the children themselves.

GUIDELINES FOR A WHOLESOME "LUNCH" BOX:
A wholegrain sandwich, or healthy wheat-free alternatives, and a fruit are both ideal and quite sufficient as a snack for a young child.

For those children who have a bigger appetite we would prefer that you supplement the lunch box with an extra sandwich rather than an array of alternatives such as carrot sticks or biltong and left over supper. While these are admittedly healthy, at school, they often take a long time to eat and so deprive the child of essential playtime. In addition some of those foods tend to be messy and complicate the process of the children washing their plates. Dishwashing is an important part of our snack time routine.

Children to bring only water to school to drink.

It is important to remember that "lunch time "is a mid-morning snack and not a full meal or treat time. Obviously we advocate that the children should be encouraged to eat healthy meals, but feel that these can be enjoyed at home during other meal times.

Children do not need a huge variety of foods. The simpler the better and they like to know what to expect. This also places a pedagogical emphasis on sustenance as opposed to treats. The variety can come in the fillings.

NOT SUITABLE:
- Chips, popcorn, sweets (even sugared dried fruit)
- Pre-packaged snacks of any kind (e.g. cheddars, pretzels, nuts & raisins)
- Sweet muffins and cakes
- "Health" bars
- Vienna sausages
- Biltong – takes too long to eat

- Nuts – takes too long to eat, and because of increasing number of children with serious allergies.
- White bread sandwiches
- Drinking or other yoghurt
- Chocolate drinks
- Left over supper can be too messy and a problem for washing up.

Please remember that the other children in the class are the best, critical quality controllers of their friends' lunch boxes.

BIRTHDAYS AND FESTIVALS

It goes without saying that excess sugar on a daily basis is unhealthy. Our food policy guidelines support this fact. However by the same token, sugar is pleasurable and delightful and we therefore allow it on special occasions. For this reason we celebrate birthdays and some festivals with a traditional home baked cake (with a minimal amount of icing). Some festivals might end with a special treat.

WORK PARTIES AND FUND RAISERS

Please abide by the general food policy of Michael Oak. Refer to website: www.michealoak.org.za

GENERAL FOOD POLICY

This policy applies to all markets, fairs, food sales, class fundraising and Tuck-shop. There are two categories: guidelines and fixed rules, which also apply as far as packed lunches for pupils are concerned. We at Michael Oak embrace and support the following principles, which will ensure an ever-growing awareness in the community concerning the quality of our food.

GUIDELINES:

- Biodynamic or organically grown ingredients are preferred
- Home-made
- Fresh and wholesome, avoiding the following:
  - Processed foods
  - Refined sugar
  - Margarine
  - Artificial additives and colouring
  - Genetically modified food
  - Plastic and polystyrene containers are to be avoided

RULES:

- No pre-packed snack foods such as chips, chocolate etc are allowed.
- No concentrated sweet confectionery or sweets.
- No fizzy, artificially flavoured cool-drinks

Any proposed deviation from the above policy requires special permission.

CLOTHING POLICY

Our Clothing Policy in the Kindergarten is based primarily on serving the development and needs of the growing child in all aspects of its being. Please bear in mind that all our rules have been carefully constructed, taking into consideration the teacher's availability for the individual child's and the whole group's need.

The Sense of Warmth is a critical aspect of the child's development, rarely understood and not to be undermined. Our children are new-dwellers in the physical home (body), and the way in which they take hold of this home will impact on their future development. The young child needs outer warmth in order to grow its body as a whole and for the development of the brain and inner organs. Children need to be taught how to feel differences in temperature as they are not able to regulate their own body temperature, and need you as parents to guide them. The good old fashioned rule of thumb is the 3-layer 'onion' method (in winter), vest, long-sleeved t-shirt and jersey, so that layers can be peeled off depending on the weather. Even in summer, a vest is highly recommended.

Sunhats are compulsory in the first and last terms. Even though our gardens may be shady, the ultraviolet rays still penetrate.

In winter (2nd and 3rd terms) shoes are compulsory as the ground is cold, and it supports what we have said about the sense of warmth. But, in summer, bare feet are best!

We prefer that the children wear:

- Natural fibers so that their skin can breathe and that their sense of touch is nurtured.
- Good, comfortable, flat, round-toed shoes or sandals that offer their developing feet support.
- Shoes that they can easily put on and take off themselves independently. Please, no laces unless they are able to tie their own.
- Hard soled slippers and wellington boots to keep at school during the rainy season.
- All children's clothes must allow for healthy and free movements.

Not allowed:

- The wearing of leotards as the little girls often need assistance when having to go to the toilet.
- High heeled shoes as they hamper the child's ability to run, climb and balance and do not offer proper support to the developing spine.

- Slip slops hamper the overall healthy development of the young child's feet and toes and gait is compromised.
- Please bear in mind that pumps are not the ideal shoe for a child's developing feet and posture.

BRANDING AND SUBTLE ADVERTISING

Children must wear clothing that is plain or with subtle aesthetic designs (butterflies, stripes, flowers etc). We do not allow garish designs, branding cartoons, animations, superheroes or logos and advertising of any kind – which goes for lunchboxes, shoes, school bags, rain gear and hats. These form a barrier between the teacher and the child and between the child and his/ her peers. We strive to protect the children where they are in their development, and to enhance their own imaginations and sense of beauty and truth, while these images simply do not fit in with the environment and ethos we strive so hard to create and uphold. Should this not be adhered to, the child's clothes that are branded with cartoons or animations will be turned inside out.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA POLICY

Electronic screens (TV's, tablets, cell phones, computer games etc.) are embedded in our culture and taken for granted to such a degree that it is often difficult for us to question its value. Similarly, with the increasing prominence of cinema, computers and computer games and their adoption into everyday life, rarely is a dissenting voice heard. However it is widely held amongst those involved in Steiner education, as well as, by researchers in many countries that screens are detrimental to the healthy development of the child.

We expect parents to take note of suggestions from teachers if we find that children's behaviour and social integration is being affected by what they are watching, and to adhere as far as possible to the electronic media policy at Michael Oak.

The reasons for this are:

- At the time of birth many of the vital organs are not yet fully formed. Their healthy development is gradually completed through physical nourishment and through the child's experience of its own movements and the feedback gained through sense impressions. These are particularly important for neurological development, on which the ability for intellectual learning later depends. Watching screens inhibits all movements, but most disastrously it causes eye-focus to be fixed rigidly at the distance of the screen, while the illusion of a three-dimensional picture is presented. On the objective level of sense impressions this is a lie, which can cause subconscious confusion to the nervous system, while preventing the movement and feedback, which would provide a natural correction. When such things are experienced frequently at a young age, inner habits are formed which can become stumbling blocks for conceptual learning.

- Young children learn by imitation and take all sense-impressions deeply into their being. Play and amusement are not just time-fillers. The first-hand experiences they bring are the joyful means of developing the child's faculties for doing, feeling and thinking. All sense-impressions are food for the growth of both body and soul and children trustfully welcome whatever loved adults bring them. Many well-meaning adults do not realise the extent of their children's dependence in this respect. Once it is realised that up to age 8 or 9 to see is to subconsciously imitate, one sees in a new light the effect of the caricatures and stereotypes which pervade so many "innocent" programmes.

- Through our education, we encourage children's natural capacity to be highly sensitive to their environment and the people around them. They are, therefore, deeply susceptible to being mesmerised; they cannot filter their absorption of the things they see and hear. We are careful in both the kindergarten and school to present material in a way appropriate to their age and sensibilities. By contrast, frequently, the quality of children's material on screens is very poor. They force images and noises of all kinds upon the child which are in our view inappropriate – the children may become desensitised as their threshold for violence, noise, aesthetics, moral and social behaviours is lowered. Young children do not have the discrimination to regulate their own watching. They are not yet able to know what is good for them and what is not and they depend on the adults around them to decide the boundaries, which will protect them (in all areas of life, not just this one) until they can freely take care of themselves.

- All children have an innate imaginative capacity and their natural state is to be active in this. As they do so, it is a capacity, which is usually lost or transformed, never to be re-lived in the same way. The effect of screens is to make children unhealthily 'still' and stifle their own imaginations. By presenting the child with 'finished' images, the child is required to do no inner work (or active play) at all and their imagination is 'disabled' whilst watching. Afterwards, this can result in listlessness, lack of initiative and boredom; children may need to be constantly entertained. Alternatively, it may result in children being over-stimulated to such an extent that they can no longer listen properly to real people – they switch on or off as they please. It is felt that this kind of stimulation is in fact deprivation for the child's own abundant creative abilities.

- Furthermore, the images that flash past on the screen are not connected to real life – they are an artificial representation of life and, as such, abstract. One cannot relate to screens. By contrast, in a Steiner school, the teachers do not use textbooks; they seek to give stories and lesson content from memory so that the communication exchange is real and alive. Children live vividly in the present and to be healthy they need to feel deeply connected to the world around them. They do not have the intellectual sophistication to cope healthily with this abstract phenomenon. Screens literally undo the work we do at our school.

We would ideally like all screens to be gathering dust under a cloth in the cupboard or to be thrown away completely! However, recognising that this is unlikely, **we request that children attending our Kindergarten do not have screen time from Sunday to Thursday. They should definitely not have screen time in the mornings before coming to school.**

If your child is used to a heavy diet of screen time, don't despair! It may be easier than it sounds to change your family routine. Many of us have discovered that one-time TV addicts have found a wealth of positive things to do in the creative and supportive atmosphere of a Steiner school community.

- Most of the above points also apply to computer games, with an additional dimension to be considered. The computer does respond in its own way and the type of linear thinking it demands has little to do with human interactions or with a child's natural mode of experience. It is undeniable that computers are of great practical use for specialised tasks in adult life. However, for normally healthy children, who are still finding their place in a three-dimensional world and learning to relate to fellow human beings in a socially harmonious way, computer games confine their developing faculties and alienate them from live realities.

- Concern regarding these activities is not restricted to Waldorf schools. Many people who work with children are becoming increasingly concerned that screens are associated with an increase in significantly disturbed behaviour among some children.

- An experienced teacher can tell almost immediately by a child's behaviour whether he or she has been watching TV or playing computer games. We ask you, as parents, to act in support of our efforts to provide a truly human-centred education and to protect your children from harm caused by the electronic media. You have chosen Waldorf Education for your child for a reason, which should be practiced and upheld.

AFTERCARE GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

The Kindergarten Aftercare is a service provided for children whose parents/ guardians, for either work or family/personal reasons, are unable to collect their children directly after school. The aftercare space is quite limited and therefore we advise that aftercare be ideally reserved for those families who really require the service.
Aftercare is not as structured or formal as the school morning, however it does provide a gentle routine where children have lunch, time to play, a story and rest, and a snack. The ideal is that the environment and values are in keeping with the Waldorf Kindergarten approach.

The daily routine is as follows:

- The children arrive once school has ended and have some time to play and settle into the aftercare environment.
- **12h50** they are called to wash hands and prepare for lunch.
- **13h00** we have lunch together at the table where a candle is lit and a blessing said before eating. Plates, cups and cutlery are provided and each child clears their place after eating before going to play.
- After lunch we have a free play time followed by a brief tidy up.
- **14h00** is rest time. Each child puts out a mattress to lie on with a pillow and blanket. It is a quiet time where the children are told a story.
- **14h30** we pack away our bedding and the children may play and are offered a light healthy snack provided by the school.
- Kindergarten Aftercare closes at **15h15**. When children are collected, they are to be signed out in the sign out register. Children who are not collected by then, are taken up to the Primary Aftercare facility ('Big Aftercare') which closes at **17h30**. Big Aftercare can be quite overwhelming for the Kindergarten children.

Please take note of the following requirements:

- We ask parents please to provide a packed lunch for aftercare. This is to be put in a separate container clearly marked with your child's name and placed in the basket in the aftercare room in the mornings. Please provide a more substantial and varied meal than the mid-morning school snack. Some suggestions are:

Finger salads, boiled egg, slice of quiche, cold meats, sausages, wrap with healthy filling, warm stews or soups in a flask, cheese, tuna mayo, pasta salad, corn/vegetable fritters.

Please also take note that the General Food Policy applies to Aftercare. See guidelines provided by school. www.michaeloak.org.za

- Please send a sun hat for aftercare, clearly marked with your child's name.

- We do our best to see that the children take responsibility for their belongings and that they are taken home at the end of the day. Items that are left behind and not claimed within a day or two are put into the general Kindergarten lost property basket.

- In keeping with the Playgroup and Kindergarten guidelines, no toys from home are allowed.

Please contact Hazel, the Aftercare supervisor, should you have any further queries. Her number is 073 919 3959. However, should you need to get a message to her during the afternoon on a school day, kindly phone the school – 021 797 9728

PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS BRINGING A CONCERN

At Michael Oak we learn and live as a community. In our classrooms and grounds we strive to make our school a safe, well cared for and happy place. We wish to make good friends and learn to trust and care for one another. We wish to respect those around us and give our best in all that we do.

In support of this intention we have:

- a clearly defined set of School Codes of Conduct for pupils, members of staff and parents, which form part of the formal agreements that we enter into at our school.
- a Formal Disciplinary Policy and Procedure to rely upon when the actions of our pupils, members of staff or parents are not in line with these codes.

This Procedure for a Parent Bringing a Concern outlines how we deal with challenges, difficulties, concerns and conflicts that may arise in our community.

- At Michael Oak, a 'concern' is defined as any dissatisfaction about the school that needs to be addressed in order to be resolved. This may be related to the actions of pupils (individuals and/or groups), members of staff, or parents.
- Concerns should be raised by the parent experiencing that concern. No concern based on hearsay, brought on behalf of others, or brought by groups, will be tabled or dealt with.
- Where a concern is a broad school-related matter, parents may raise the concern with the relevant Faculty which will decide whether it needs to be taken to College or any other mandated group within the school.
- Where a concern regards a specific teacher or therapist, College asks that the parent first approaches that person directly, at an appropriate time and in an appropriate manner, to outline the nature of the concern and request a meeting with them.
- If the parent feels unable to approach the teacher or therapist directly, he/she should approach another teacher within the Faculty concerned, who will not engage with the parent around the concern in any way but will set up a facilitated meeting of the parent and the staff member if this is deemed necessary.
- The teacher or therapist may not be able to deal with the issue immediately, but an appointment will be set up to meet with the parent at an appropriate time.
- Meetings will take place by prior arrangement only, with only one family at a time, to deal with only their specific concern.
- If the concern is not adequately resolved to the satisfaction of all parties through the meeting, it will then be taken to the relevant Faculty, as these bodies hold the pedagogical responsibility for the school. (See point 4.)
- Where another teacher within the Faculty has been involved in setting up a facilitated meeting, that teacher will consult with both parent and teacher or therapist to ascertain whether the matter has been satisfactorily resolved for both parties.
- The teacher or therapist involved in the concern will inform faculty that

the concern has been brought and will report on progress or resolution.
- Matters of a pedagogical and disciplinary nature need to be respected as resting with the teachers; at all times complying with the policies of the school.
- Should a pedagogical or disciplinary concern be sent to the Trustees, the Links Mandate, or the High School Forum, they will not table it for discussion but will immediately redirect it to the relevant teacher or faculty.
- Where a matter concerns a sports coach, the parent will take it to the sports coordinator.
- Where the matter concerns any admin, ground or support staff, it will be taken to the School Administrator.
- Where the matter concerns another parent, it should be raised with the class teacher or guardian.

Meetings of parents and staff:

- Meetings need to remain within the original parameters of the appointment regarding:
  - who attends the meeting
  - what issues are to be discussed
  - the timeframe of the meeting.
- Another colleague, a minute taker and a mentor may be present at the meeting. If the matter has been mentioned at the Faculty or to the chair of the Faculty, the Faculty or the chair will make this decision.
- Audio recordings of meetings are not permitted unless there is prior agreement by all parties attending the meeting.
- Should the meeting become counter-productive, it may need to be postponed to another time.

Should the matter be referred to the Faculty:

- The Faculty will acknowledge the communication and inform College of the matter.
- The Faculty will consult with the teacher or therapist and the parent bringing the concern, to establish a clear understanding of the matter and to decide on the best way forward.
- The Faculty will decide whether to involve the mentor where appropriate.
- A designated group will be appointed within the Faculty to follow up until the issue has been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.
- At the end of this process, the chair of the Faculty will consult with all parties to determine whether they are satisfied with the outcome, and will refer the matter to the College if no satisfactory outcome has been reached.
- The chair will inform the parent and the College of the decision.

Should the Faculty refer the matter to the College, the College will:

- acknowledge the communication
- assess the nature of the concern
- implement an enquiry process, involving other parties where necessary
- decide whether a mediator is required
- consult the appropriate structures in the school, including the Trustees, where necessary
- inform the parent of the College decision, which is final
- inform the Faculty, and other relevant bodies including the Trustees.

Communication:

- Open respectful communication is essential.
- In order to maintain a healthy solution-oriented approach, it is requested that parents speak directly to the parties involved as outlined above.
- Parents are asked to refrain from speaking to other parties regarding their concerns.
- Parents are asked to refrain from raising personal concerns in public/class meetings and rather remain within the agenda items set for that meeting.
- Email communication may be used to request a meeting and outline a concern, but not as an ongoing means of communication – especially regarding a matter while it is in process.
- Staff will not engage in any informal discussions with parents or colleagues about a matter in process, whether via telephone, email, cell phone, WhatsApp or in conversation.
- The parent will receive a formal response via the relevant staff member, Faculty or College, to communicate that the issue is in process, and to communicate decisions made.
- The intention would be to deal with the issue as timeously as possible.

Michael Oak will deal with concerns parents bring with discretion and integrity.

- The safety, well-being and protection of pupils, staff and parents are central to all decisions the school makes about confidentiality.
- Staff may not be bound to holding a matter confidentially, as in our experience this limits healthy options for dealing with a matter.
- There are very few situations where absolute confidentiality is offered. At most, limited confidentiality will apply, based on the school's discretion.

8. We hope that by following this process, we will together be able to resolve concerns amicably, respectfully, efficiently and effectively.

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