



A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

2021-2022

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**WELCOME TO
SILVER WILLOW
COTTAGE
SCHOOL**

INTRODUCTION

Dear parents

We welcome you and your family into this little community which we are striving to establish, where we hope to provide all our children with an education filled with warmth, creative growth and many opportunities for learning and development.

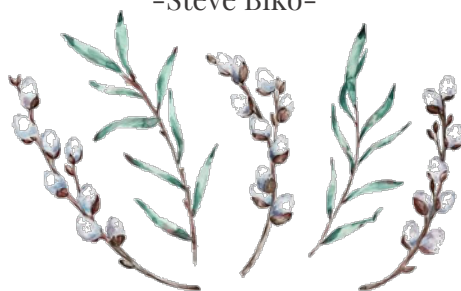
This Handbook has been put together to help you enter the school with a better understanding of the vision and structure of Silver Willow Cottage School, a Waldorf-inspired initiative.

Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian philosopher, scientist and educator, founded the first Waldorf School in 1919 at the request of Emil Molt, a German industrialist concerned with bringing order out of the chaos of World War 1. This school was set up for children of the employees of the Waldorf Cigarette Co. of Stuttgart, so Waldorf education was never intended for the privileged few. Today there are more than 1000 Waldorf schools worldwide.

Waldorf education is based on an understanding of how a child develops and seeks to introduce appropriate and necessary experiences at the right psychological moments, aiming to educate the whole child, not just the intellect. This means that the method of presentation and the choice of subjects differs at times from those in other schools.

“Education and development are seeds one to the other: the key is the humanisation of schools and the development of a comprehensive curriculum based on the worth of the whole individual.”

-Steve Biko-



ABOUT US

Silver Willow Cottage School started off as a home-school support initiative in January 2021, and is slowly evolving into a small, Waldorf-inspired cottage school right in the heart of the beautiful country village of Greyton, South Africa. As a small school we can be guided and inspired by the Steiner-Waldorf philosophy of education, while still incorporating the beauty and diversity of our particular context and time.

What we love doing is:

- Learning together
- Creating a space where the love of learning is fostered
- Connecting nature directly to the classroom
- Observing and spending time in the garden
- Enjoying seasonal celebrations and festivals
- Working with our hands to create things of beauty and use
- Being artistic and creative in everything
- Integrating our core values into our daily activities and learning
- Giving a particular focus on gratitude, love and responsibility
- Cultivating interpersonal skills like kindness, sharing, empathy and compassion.
- Nurturing Imagination through stories, songs, verses, which are all integrated into our learning and throughout the Waldorf curriculum.



VISION

- Silver Willow Cottage School aims to create an independent school that offers education in line with South African requirements.
- Our vision is to create a teaching and learning environment that educates the whole child in a creative, stimulating and nurturing way.
- We want to learn close to nature, bringing mountains and trees, flowers and bees, animals, rivers and seas into the consciousness of our curriculum and learning.
- We imagine a world which is filled with kindness, generosity and sharing, gratitude and love.
- In the classroom we strive to create an environment where children are inspired to grow into responsible people—caring for and honouring themselves, their community, their country and their natural environment.

MISSION

Our educational approach guides us to:

- understand and work with Steiner's indications in our curriculum design and content choices
- cultivate an ethos of gratitude, love and responsibility
- nurture children according to their individual potential in a joyful, kind and compassionate way
- create a learning environment that will encourage imagination, creativity, resilience, empathy, innovation, balance and responsibility
- create and celebrate a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and community
- value and recognise that all life forms are sacred, interdependent and of value

TUITION

Silver Willow Cottage School aims to provide tuition for children for Class 1 to Class 7. The current pioneering class started with Class 1 in 2021. The intention is to work with new parents to extend the age groups where possible.

A qualified teacher provides tuition according to a learning plan, which generally follows the Waldorf school calendar and is similar but not identical to the state school calendar. Lessons run 3 days a week from approximately 8:45-13:00.

The learning programme offers education in line with national South African educational requirements. The teacher works broadly and flexibly with the materials to be learned, and the differing temperaments, maturational rates and abilities of the children in the class.

The goal is not test-oriented skill levels, but rather the development of skills at an age appropriate level. There is much continued practice and consolidation of learning in an environment in which the picture-forming faculties of imagination are nourished and learning becomes a living force within each child.

HOW WE LEARN

Ritual, rhythm and routine

Ritual, rhythm and routine are used consciously bringing a sense of reverence, movement and healthy habits to teaching and learning.

Main Lessons

We follow the rhythms of block Main Lessons; teaching a specific subject over a few weeks. Running lessons take place after breaktime.



Active, creative Learning

Learning is active, creative and holistic, by:

- integrating art, science and language in equal value
- including practical activities and artisan crafts
- encouraging outdoor experiential learning
- integrating indoor and outdoor movement
- including gardening, nature play, games and sport
- Waldorf principles of education, as formulated by Rudolf Steiner, are implemented in the curriculum, classroom practice and administration
- progress in foundational mathematics and literacy will be evaluated in Class 3 and Class 6 by an external academic standards assessment

A Narrative Approach

We use stories as a basis for teaching concepts, ideas, enliven the imagination, foster and strengthen feelings and build community. Children are able to experience the symbolic meaning contained in stories, they build strong picture images and they develop their language skills and memory. For example, the fairy tales in Class 1 help to give children the feeling that the world makes sense, that life's challenges and adventures have purpose, and that all life is a process of "being" and growth. Children need these stories to nourish their soul - to confirm their innate feeling that the world is a secure house for them. Stories are created or chosen consciously according to the age and developmental stage of the children - so that they will fulfil the needs of the child, and bring depth and meaning.



SUBJECTS

English Literacy

Skills of reading, writing, spelling and handwriting are practiced daily, through the media of story, movement, games, recitation, drawing and painting. Artistic activities support the literacy lesson and enable the child to form an inner experience of the content and thus to write about it, read it and recite it. Reading forms an active part of the daily lesson and is monitored and continuously assessed.

Mathematics

The aim, in the lower primary, is that the children have a confident grasp of numbers, their quantity, extent and quality. The four processes of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division receive equal focus. Children do a vigorous daily practice of oral arithmetic and steadily build on their numbers foundation. The focus is on activity-orientated learning and continued practice to consolidate learning. This forms the basis for the more complex concepts introduced in the senior primary.

Afrikaans & isiXhosa

Afrikaans as second language is introduced from Class 1 in the form of songs, verses and games, with the focus on oral activities that build familiarity with using the language. Children learn a broad range of vocabulary and engage in dialogue. Spelling, writing, reading and grammar follow in the later grades.

isiXhosa as a third language is introduced from Class 1, with the proviso that there are sufficient pupils in the class to make this possible. There is a similar focus on oral activities that build familiarity with using the language, through learning simple songs, verses and games and dialogue.

Nature Studies

The world of Nature is brought to the child through story and description, in which the ecology of animals and plants, the seasons and the elements of the earth, are presented in vivid detail. Activities in the outdoors provide the framework for observation, investigation and explanation. This exploration of the natural world provides the foundation for the study of the sciences in the senior primary.

Form Drawing

Form drawing consists of freehand drawing of non-representational forms. They are rhythmically repeated patterns, reflections and rotations, geometric figures, and intricate interlaced designs. This exploration includes freehand construction of the basic geometrical forms and an understanding of their properties. It lays the foundation for the development of handwriting and also for the study of geometry in the senior primary.

Art

Art is a vitally important part of children's holistic development and forms an integral part of the learning plan. The children create their own lesson books and close attention is paid to illustrations, handwriting, and the artistic composition of each page.

Music

Music benefits the child's physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual health. Children sing every day as part of the morning opening ritual and part of the rhythmic time. Songs form part of festivals and other celebrations.

Handwork

All children learn to knit and crochet in the handwork lessons in the first years of primary school. Handwork develops manual dexterity, co-ordination, patience and persistence. It is a valuable way in which the creative spirit is nurtured. Children gain a sense of achievement when making things of beauty and usefulness, and develop an appreciation for the natural materials that are used.

Sport and Game and Outdoor Classroom

The learning plan supports the healthy development of the growing child in the early years with cooperative play and non-competitive games. Through these activities the child builds a strong foundation of physical skills that include balance, spatial awareness, motor planning, coordination and rhythm. Early grade school is seen as a time for the children to play in harmony with others and explore how their bodies move. The school places great value on the children spending ample time outdoors. They learn meaningful work and skills, and enjoy unstructured time for free play.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The Management Body of the Silver Willow Cottage School comprises a Core Management Group of parents, viz:

1. Gervaise Christie
2. Justin White
3. Ashley Gordon
4. Victor Van den Berg
5. Marina Evans
6. Amanda Van den Berg
7. William Evans

This management body serves on the following mandate groups and meets regularly to take decisions on matters arising:

- Recruitment of parents, children and teachers
- Finances
- Legal requirements
- The School Development Plan

Amanda Van den Berg is the coordinator responsible for administration, liaison with prospective parents and coordination of the above mandate groups. She can be reached at +27 72 266 5545 or silverwillow@gmail.com



POLICIES

Parent participation

At Silver Willow Cottage School we value the participation and input of all parents as parents are an essential part of the growth and development of the school and play an active role in supporting the education of their children.

The school expects parents to attend all class events, volunteer their time and assistance where needed, participate in the end of term festivals, and hold an overall sense of a guiding and watchful community surrounding the children.

Food

The school prescribes that children bring fresh, balanced and nutritious lunches to school, which may include: home-cooked meals/soup, whole-wheat sandwiches, vegetable snacks, fruit, nuts, and natural yoghurt. No processed food, sugars, treats or soft drinks/juices of any kind are allowed. Children may bring a bottle of water as a drink to school.

Eco-friendly

The Silver Willow Cottage School supports environment-friendly initiatives and strives to avoid the use of single-use plastics, straws, food packaging, etc. Parents are requested to be mindful of this discipline when packing the daily lunch.

Birthdays

Birthdays are an important celebration, especially during the younger years. Each class has an age-appropriate birthday ritual intended to bring a loving focus on the birthday child. The teacher will give the lead regarding these activities at the beginning of the year. A homemade cake is preferred as the special birthday food.

Toys

The teacher at Silver Willow Cottage School takes care to equip their classrooms with beautiful and natural materials. This leads to the awakening of the children's own creative imagination, enabling them to be original, caring and flexible in their play with

the toys as well as with the other children. Parents are asked to ensure that children do not bring their own toys to school as this may result in friction and exclusion and is seldom conducive to play.

Cell Phones

We are concerned about the negative impact that cell phones have on our children and environment, and request that no cell phones, tablets, or i-pads are used within the boundaries of the school.

Electronic Media, Television and DVD's

There is strong evidence that the viewing of television by young children works negatively against the healthy development of their senses and their direct experience of the world. It is a passive experience and in many ways it denies the development of the imagination. This is partly due to the fact that, insofar as it provides a completed picture, it allows little inner imaginative activity - the very quality that should be enhanced in children. It has furthermore been established that language and verbal skills, concentration and the ability to carry out tasks systematically are all limited by television viewing. It has been our experience that the adverse effect of television is observable in the classroom. In particular, the quality of the children's play and art activities are deteriorating. It is obvious too that many programmes are emotionally distressing and violent. In addition, children often watch television before bedtime, carrying the images of their stimulated and strained eyes into sleep.

The use of computers and computer games for this age group is also considered highly detrimental to their emotional and physical development.

In the light of the above, the school urges parents to pay serious attention to the amount of time their children spend on electronic devices and that they investigate other more active and creative pastimes for their children, especially family activities. The school expects parents to inform themselves of the effects of these devices on children. There is a considerable amount of supporting evidence for this view and we will share specific articles to consider.

Children's Health

Teachers, like parents, would like to see healthy, bright-eyed children fully engaged in all classroom activities. We therefore strongly encourage a good night's sleep and nutritious breakfast before each school day and appropriate recuperation, as well as early wellness intervention if unwell. We prefer sick children not to come to school, and rather return when he/she is healthy enough to take up normal activity.

Absences

The school accepts absences due to illness, all other absences should be arranged in agreement with the teacher.

Environmental safety

Children are supervised at all times, both indoors and outdoors, by their class teacher.

- The outdoor play area is fenced off and gates are kept closed.
- All wood is sanded and kept smooth to prevent splinters.
- All hazardous material, chemicals and cleaning solutions are locked and kept out of reach of children.
- A first aid kit is available on the premises and is appropriately stocked.
- The school has one fire extinguisher which is regularly maintained.

First Aid and Emergency Situations

Our first aid is kept out of reach from the children. The kit contains only first aid supplies and we do not have medication to administer. Only when the parent instructs or gives special permission in writing we will give the child medicine. If a child is injured due to a fall that results in a scratch, cut or bruise and there is not excessive bleeding or bruising, the lead teacher may administer some minor first aid in the room.

If there is any indication that the child requires further attention and/or treatment his/her parents are immediately contacted by telephone. In the case of an emergency the school will call parents immediately and follow the parents instruction. If a parent asks us to call the ambulance we will, or the parent will take the injured or sick child to the hospital.

COVID-19 Regulations

Parents are advised to inform the teacher and parent liaison if they or their child have contracted COVID-19, or have been in contact with anyone with COVID-19.

Parents are to keep their child at home if there is a possibility that anyone in the immediate family may have contracted the virus. The teacher has to be informed.

