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# Social Media Policy

In Waldorf education, we recognise the harmful impact of media on infants, children, and young people's development. While adults may benefit from electronic media, it contradicts the core principles of Waldorf education, which emphasise imagination, transformation, and willpower. Thus, parents must carefully consider media's introduction to their children.

At Silver Willow, we prioritise nurturing inner imagination through real-world experiences and authentic storytelling. Virtual images and media divert children from genuine interactions, eroding the moral and truthful foundation of their education. We therefore highly value the timing of a child's exposure to certain technologies and media. We believe that it is crucial to provide them with sufficient time to develop their inner faculties and navigate the complexities of the physical world before immersing them in the digital realm.

Waldorf education emphasises active, hands-on learning experiences that stimulate a child's senses and imagination. Therefore, it is essential to encourage real, active play, spending time in nature, and positive engagement with their interests, rather than passively consuming endless videos, TikToks, and Instagram feeds. Instead, we strive to inspire children to create meaningful stories, share their ideas, and participate in thoughtful discussions, rather than solely being recipients of information, enticed by virtual relationships and potentially harmful content.

Research consistently shows that direct experiences significantly benefit brain development in childhood and adolescence, surpassing virtual experiences. Media-related issues like Continuous Partial Attention, early consumerism, obesity, and premature sexualisation pose risks to child development. While computer literacy is important, electronic media should be introduced as a resource and tool only after children have a strong experiential foundation.

As a school, we follow a Waldorf-inspired approach, where it is recommended to delay the introduction of social media until a child has reached an appropriate age and level of maturity. Although media can complement direct experiences at an appropriate age, it should never replace them. Hence, technology is thoughtfully incorporated into the curriculum, aligning with students' developmental stages and enhancing their learning process.

The media policy serves as a contract between the school and parents to limit children's exposure to media. Its purpose is to nurture children's capacity for imagination, promote healthy emotional development, foster independent thinking, and encourage positive action.

### Guidelines for Media Use

**Early Childhood (0-7 years):**

A screen and electronic media-free early childhood is crucial for creating a nourishing environment. In these years, children learn through imitation, and exposure to media images hinders their imagination. Silver Willow asks parents to commit to not exposing their children to electronic media during this stage, including recorded/broadcasted music, film, video, phones, and games.

**Early Grades (7- 9 years):**

To maintain the integrity of the classroom, Silver Willow requests that children come to school with clear minds and hearts. Parents are encouraged to provide a media-free environment for children up to the age of 9, and where possible excluding or limiting all electronic media, radio, audio books, and recorded music. A free imaginative life is essential, and pictorial content is central to education during these years.

**Early Grades (9-11 years):**

It is recommended that prior to the 9-year change (or age 10), media exposure should be restricted or avoided. After the 9-year change, conscious and careful exposure is encouraged while considering the Waldorf education philosophy. At this age occasional movie or video experiences can be introduced as a family activity, but not during the school week. However, prioritising nature trips, meaningful work, and playtime is still recommended.

**Middle School (12-14 years):**

We believe middle school-aged children are too young for social media and recommend delaying its use until high school. Therefore, we request that middle school students refrain from using smartphones. After the age of 12, parents can gradually introduce electronic media such as computer games, movies, email, and the internet. Parents should monitor and make choices regarding content, quantity, and timing. Caution is advised with email and social media due to potential overuse and inappropriate content. Parental supervision is necessary for children aged 14 and up, regardless of their age. Keeping computers in a central location within the home is recommended.

### Media Support Plan

We need to support each other to fulfil the goals of the Media Policy so that we can all benefit from the advantages of a healthy Waldorf classroom.

As a school community we can -

* Discuss the Media Policy and provide support during the annual parent-teacher interviews.
* In termly Parent Evenings discuss the progress of the class as a whole and offer age-appropriate support and resources.
* Use the Class Letters and the Website to share information on the effects of media and how to create healthy environments.
* Organise Parenting talks to cover various beneficial topics, including the effects of media on children.

### Media Policy Implementation Outside of School

To ensure successful implementation of the media policy, parents must guide their children in appropriate media use outside of school.

We know that families are all different and different world views will inform different parenting approaches, however, we want to encourage parents to maintain open communication with their children, other parents and teachers, so that a common understanding and approach can be cultivated.

Through this policy, as a Waldorf community, we want to commit to a shared understanding and approach to social media, so that we can raise our children in a trusting, open community, which is guided by the developmental, social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs of our children.

*Thanks to the following schools Sqaumish Waldorf, South Shore Waldorf and Bright Water Waldorf for their policies and guidelines which shaped our policy.*

Other useful links:

[*https://www.southdevonsteinerschool.org/uploads/5/8/8/7/58878259/sdss\_-\_social\_media\_and\_e-safety\_policy\_-\_may\_2017.pdf*](https://www.southdevonsteinerschool.org/uploads/5/8/8/7/58878259/sdss_-_social_media_and_e-safety_policy_-_may_2017.pdf)

[*https://www.squamishwaldorf.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Squamish-Waldorf-School-Media-Policy.pdf*](https://www.squamishwaldorf.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Squamish-Waldorf-School-Media-Policy.pdf)

[*https://www.sfwaldorf.org/uploaded/docs/gs/SFWGS\_Technology\_Guidelines.pdf*](https://www.sfwaldorf.org/uploaded/docs/gs/SFWGS_Technology_Guidelines.pdf)