

## **MICHAEL PARK SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN POLICY**

### **SPECIAL CHARACTER**

#### **Rationale**

As a State-integrated Rudolf Steiner School, Michael Park has a special character which is aligned to Rudolf Steiner's philosophy of Education. Michael Park works in the spirit of this education within the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand and the changing culture and diversity of Auckland. This policy gives the framework through which Michael Park can align its governance, management, curriculum and pedagogy to its special character while meeting its requirements as an integrated school under the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975 and subsequent amendments.

#### **Purpose**

- To describe what our special character means to Michael Park
- To constitute a relevant filter through which governance and management ensure our special character is delivered, visible and reflected in all that we do

#### **Special Character Description**

The curriculum and pedagogy in Steiner / Waldorf schools is based on the ideals and practices of education described by Rudolf Steiner and the continuing research of Steiner / Waldorf teachers and other compatible pedagogical approaches. This curriculum and pedagogy is then localised and informed by the unique context of Aotearoa, New Zealand<sup>i</sup>.

Our approach to pedagogy is inseparable from the process of curriculum formation. Central to this is a picture of the child as a human individual of body, soul and spirit in a gradual and purposeful process of growth and development often called the process of incarnation. Our task as educators is to facilitate the removal of hindrances and support the individual to realise their inner potentials and aspirations.

Steiner / Waldorf education is based on the understanding that the human being is a spiritual being on a purposeful earthly journey and during this life journey distinctive progressive phases of development unfold. Child development is seen as a process of gradual incarnation and individualisation. While the child grows up in its physical body it also grows down from the spiritual world and creates in this meeting ground its own world of soul. Approximately every seven years a new soul faculty emerges which matures during the following period. A healthy education will make best use of the opportunities for development that the different phases present. Our curriculum is oriented towards facilitating this process.

The three soul faculties of thinking, feeling and willing are all present in different phases of maturation in the child's development. The education of these three soul faculties involves working consciously with the head, heart and hands within the curriculum and as an educator. With this in mind the nourishment of healthy life-forces occurs in the kindergarten and junior school as a foundation for later metacognitive and critical thinking processes.

Teaching is fundamentally a human experience and the art of Steiner / Waldorf pedagogy has at its foundation the education of the child with reverence, warmth and acceptance:

Kia rangatira ai te tamaiti

*In order to revere the child*

Tohua ki te aroha

*We must guide with love*

Tukuna tōna mana, kia rere

*And allow the child's own authority to flow*

### **Guidelines**

1. The school will support and honour the role of the College of Teachers as the body responsible for ensuring our curriculum, pedagogy and teacher development reflects our special character.
2. The College of Teachers will uphold a reflective management function and maintain a commitment to the spiritual work that guides and nurtures the development of the school.
3. The Principal will work with the College of Teachers to enable, monitor and review the evolving special character component in the school and kindergarten.
4. The College of Teachers, with the assistance of the RSST, will encourage, enable and provide opportunities for teachers to understand and develop their practice in a manner that supports our special character.
5. Staff are required to engage with the special character and ensure their planning and teaching and parent communications are consistent with the special character.
6. The Principal will monitor current and emerging trends in Steiner and New Zealand education for the purpose of ensuring that Michael Park remains a relevant and effective Steiner School.
7. The school will provide an annual programme of community education including how the parents can support the school and their child's journey in Steiner Education.
8. In the annual review and preparation of the School Charter, the Principal and Board will ensure that our special character is clearly reflected along with the Ministry of Education requirements.
9. Budgeting and financial decisions will reflect our special character and our goals and priorities relating to development of our special character.
10. The special character will be subject to ongoing review.

Ratified by Board/RSST:



Signed for BOT/RSST

Date: 22/09/2014

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<sup>i</sup> Further elaboration on the school and kindergarten's Special Character can be found in (1) The School charter (2) The Essential Principles of Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Federation of Rudolf Steiner Schools in New Zealand Curriculum Guidelines (2011, p7), the Special Character review tool and the kindergarten philosophy statement.