



# Candlenut Steiner School

*Peace Protection Enlightenment*



## School Vision

It is our aim to be true to the spirit and intentions of the educational impulses and insights offered by Rudolf Steiner.

We aim to support each individual child in striving to reach their own full potential. We work to encourage each child's unique gifts and potentials to unfold in a creative, nurturing, peaceful and respectful environment.

We strive to develop equally the faculties of thinking, feeling and willing - head, heart and hands - within each child, so strong foundations are laid for initiative and moral strength in adult life.

We aim to create a place where goodness, beauty and truth permeate the pedagogical, physical and social fabrics.

It is our intention to be aware of and responsive to the unique learning opportunities provided by our local natural environment.

We are continually striving to provide and develop a curriculum and learning programme that is inspired by a deep understanding of human development. A curriculum that embraces and reflects the universal values of freedom, equality, peace and democracy and that values diversity and individual worth: a curriculum that enables children to develop into productive and moral adults, who are, in and of themselves, able to impart meaning to their lives.

We view ourselves as a community of learners - teachers, parents, and students - striving to achieve individual, communal and global growth and understanding.

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

**-Rudolf Steiner**

## School Details

Candlenut Steiner School is an independent private school situated in Kuranda (approximately 20kms from Cairns) in Far North Queensland. The school has a current enrolment of 185 students and offers an educational program from Kindergarten to Class Seven in Primary School and currently offers Class 8 and 9 in High School. Class 10 will be added in 2013. The school is co-educational and non-denominational and offers a curriculum based on the educational insights and impulses of Rudolf Steiner.

Rudolf Steiner (1864 - 1925), an Austrian scientist, humanitarian and philosopher, was a man ahead of his time. He developed a new approach to many essential aspects of life including medicine, architecture, agriculture, the arts, social science and education. He ventured beyond the study of human beings as merely creatures of intellect and physical form, to acknowledge the importance of human spirit. He viewed the world holistically as well as spiritually and foresaw the problems arising in our modern world and provided insights into possible solutions.

Anthroposophy, meaning 'the wisdom of man', is the name given to the philosophical perspective underpinning Steiner's work. It is not a religion. There is no compulsion and no dogma. Neither are Steiner's ideas actively transmitted to the children. They merely provide a perspective from which the teachers can deepen their understanding of children and develop their teaching craft, so that they can nurture their students in a more meaningful way.

Steiner education endeavours to educate the whole child. It addresses equally the areas of academia, artistic experience and practical skills, along with a nurturing of the human spirit. Educating head, heart and hands is regarded as important so as to produce well-rounded, capable adults. Through this balanced approach students develop clarity of thought, a sensitivity of feeling, and a constructive strength of will.

## School Values and Pastoral Care

At Candlenut Steiner School we seek to remove competitive pressures inherent in many educational establishments. We prefer to see each child reach his or her own full potential and express his or her own uniqueness and individuality. This individuality is allowed to unfold in a creative, nurturing, stress free, peaceful and respectful environment. It is inhibited where children are required to compete against each other to achieve externally imposed goals. Steiner education prefers motivation and direction to come from within the depths of each human being. It is the teacher's role to kindle this spark through creative, caring and inspired teaching practice. The teacher then allows the individual, in freedom, to unfold that which lies within.

All teachers are encouraged to foster loving relationships with all the students in the school and to develop relationships with the families of the children in their care. Teachers are as much concerned with the children's emotional and physical development as their academic progress. Candlenut's unique curriculum has been specifically designed to address all aspects of the child's developmental stage, with academic learning delivered in a way that stirs the feelings, awakens a sense of morality, connects students to the natural world, engenders a sense of wonder and enthusiasm for life and learning and enhances healthy physical growth and development.

Close relationships between teaching staff are fostered via weekly meetings to ensure that the care, safety and needs of every student in the school are supported. Teachers work collaboratively to help students and solve problems and issues that may arise. The school has a well developed behaviour management policy based on the understanding that for children to develop in a healthy way there needs to be a steady movement of authority from outer to inner. When children are young, there is initially a need for constant positive and gentle guidance from adults who can model loving authority steeped in personal discipline. Gradually we begin to expect children to develop self discipline and to take more and more responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Teachers at the school support and encourage this process through the specific behaviour management techniques implemented at different stages of children's development.

At Candlenut we recognise the importance of developing values in young people. To meet our responsibility to educate children holistically, a values program has been incorporated into our school culture. To encourage community and home involvement, continuity and support, parents are made aware via the monthly newsletter of the particular value being focused upon.

## School Management Structure

Candlenut Steiner School is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, with a Board of Directors who oversees the long term planning, legal and financial management of the school. As the company is registered through ASIC and is funded by both Federal and State Government there are several external and governmental checks and reporting procedures completed annually. The company is made up of all full members of the College of Teachers and the Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of dedicated teachers, the Educational Administrator and the Business Manager (ex-officio members). The constitution of the school states that at all times two thirds of the Board members shall be experienced Steiner teachers. A majority internal Board allows the direction of the school to be guided by people who are on the front-line and are fully aware of the day to day happenings of the school and the needs of the individual children enrolled at the school.

The day to day operation of the school is the responsibility of the Management group, consisting of the Business Manager, The Educational Administrator and the Head of College. Issues that require the input of the whole College of Teachers are referred to their meeting. In general, issues relating to paedogogy, programming, child studies or festivals are dealt with by the College.

The College of Teachers forms the heart of the school, guiding the paedogogical direction. Members of the College strive to continuously deepen their understanding of Steiner philosophy and deepen the College's functioning. The COT consists of all permanent teachers and aides who teach or administer in the school. Teachers and other permanent staff are granted provisional membership to the College for the first 12 months of their employment, after which they may be invited by the full members of College to become a full member.

## Curriculum

The curriculum presented to students at Steiner schools worldwide is unique in that artistic subjects are given equal time and attention alongside, and within, academic subjects to ensure that each child gains real skills in the areas of art, music, drama and handwork, that they can use throughout their lives.

"Art exists for its own sake. Teachers should love art so much that they do not want this experience to be lost in children. They will then see how the children grow through their experiences in art. It is art that awakens their intelligence.

It is the teacher's artistic sensibility that brings soul into the school. They bring a happy mood into the children's seriousness and dignity into their joy. With our intellect, we merely comprehend nature; it takes artistic feeling to experience it."

Rudolf Steiner

Candlenut Steiner School uses the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework, a nationally accredited curriculum that is endorsed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

## Extra-curricular Activities

At Candlenut Steiner school we are committed to providing extra-curricular activities for students and their families, to enrich their schooling and to promote and enhance school and community relations.

Each year we hold two whole school community camps where families are invited to camp together over a weekend in a relaxed environment. The school also provides many opportunities for our students, their families and friends to meet socially, such as the annual Bush Dance, the seasonal festivals, community music days, the Rainbow Fair and others.

Our students sing together in a school choir, and our High School students perform in the high School ensemble group.

All classes experience excursions which enrich their educational programme, and incursions where visitors to the school bring specialised knowledge. These include elders from our local community, who deepen the students' cultural understanding. Each class from Class 5 and up go on at least one class camp every year.

Candlenut also facilitates extra lessons for students in singing, piano, guitar, violin and recorder.



## Parental Involvement

We seek to work alongside parents to ensure that together we can offer the children the very best educational experience. School and home are seen as two elements that create a whole learning experience for children. Both must be working harmoniously towards the same goal for a successful outcome.

One of the roles of the parents within the school is to help develop and grow the cultural life of the school. To help organise and participate in community building activities, festivals and celebrations, concerts and plays, excursions, music concerts, fund raising and study groups.

Parents also participate by contributing 20 community hours each year. These hours can be used in helping out at the tuck shop or in the library, assisting teachers in and out of the classrooms, gardening, attending working bees etc. A Class Carer is elected for each class and it is their role to organise class social events and support the teacher as needed.

We aim to promote a strong and meaningful sense of community within the school. This sense of community is encouraged through community gatherings and festivals. The school hosts four seasonal festivals each year.

The school has an active Parents and Friends association, known as Eager And Ready To Help (EARTH), whose work supports the school in many varied ways. Following is the EARTH vision statement:

*Our Steiner School is an exceptional school. It is not like other schools where the child is dropped off in the mornings, picked up in the afternoons, and the running of the school is of little concern.*

*This school is a community of families who wish for something special, not only for their children, but as a lifestyle choice. As this community, we need to create the sense of belonging for parents, children and teachers, and to support each other and our school in creating the beautiful, nurturing environment in which both our children and we can grow.*

*Our school relies on the commitment of you and your families to build this sense of community, of coming together to support each other, our school and teachers, to create our school's many amazing events, and to share the vision for our school. This coming together demonstrates to our children how to work together and what can be achieved as a community, reinforcing the beliefs and values of our school.*

*The EARTH group aims to provide our school and its community with this support, to serve the school community in a range of areas by taking on special roles and commitments, and to provide a forum at which parents' thoughts, suggestions and concerns can be aired and discussed. There is close liaison between EARTH and the College of Teachers.*



*The EARTH group provides opportunity for families to nourish our school and have creative input to support and influence the everyday environment for our children, to support the teachers and allow them to proceed with classroom duties without the distractions of fundraising and other needs, and to show our children we care for and support their school.*

*All parents and friends are genuinely welcome to attend meetings, and all contributions have a positive effect on the school. Many people have many qualities, and we need to seek out and make use of the differences among the skills within our community. Supporting the EARTH group doesn't mean you will get lumped with a hundred odd jobs; just being present at meetings helps to keep the energy cycling, and reinforces support for our school community.*

*Being a committed part of our school community involves keeping up to date with news and initiatives, attending working bees, being reliable for rostered duties (flowers and frozies etc.), helping with the Rainbow Fair and other fundraising activities, and taking an interest in the EARTH group and associated activities (mainly fundraising). What can you offer? Come together with other parents, get to know each other and become part of the community involved with creating OUR school for OUR children. It is fun and the personal rewards are tremendous. You are part of this school too.*

Candlenut school parents were involved in the following activities in 2011:

- Organising fundraising events
- Building and grounds maintenance and upgrade
- Festival organisation
- Tuckshop operation
- Craft group
- Friday morning Cuppa Time
- Thursday afternoon Community Market
- Class carers
- Driving and helping on excursions and camps
- Gardening
- Working Bees
- Classroom reading programmes
- Library help
- Other activities through the EARTH group

## Staffing

Qualifications	Percentage of Classroom Teachers and School Leaders
Doctorate	0%
Masters	0%
Bachelor	100%
Diploma	0%
Certificate	0%

**Average Staff Attendance for the school, based on unplanned absences of sick and emergency leave periods of up to 5 days.**

Number of Staff	Number of School Days	Total Days Absent	Average Staff attendance rate
10.8	186	48.5	97.6%

**Proportions of Staff retained from the previous year**

Number of permanent teaching staff at the end of 2011	Number of these staff retained in 2012	% Retention rate
9.2	6.2	67.4%

## Teacher Professional Development

### *Expenditure on and teacher participation in Professional Development in 2011/2012:*

The total funds expended on teacher professional development during the year was \$16,415.00. 100% of our teaching staff was involved in school funded Professional Development activities.

### *Professional Development Activities 2011/2012:*

- Gleneason Steiner School 1 week intensives for class teachers from classes 1 to 7 covering the following topics: literacy, numeracy, craft, music, painting, drawing, child development, building resilience
- Steiner Education Australia conference 5 days
- Certificate III in Children's Services for the kindergarten assistants
- IT conference at Lorien Novalis Steiner School
- Extra Lesson Conference at Mt Barker Steiner School
- FABIC - working with Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Art training at Samford Valley Steiner School
- Attendance at SEA delegates meeting in Melbourne
- Attendance at GLaM conference Sydney
- Attendance at Leaders Forum Brisbane
- Attendance at ISQ Principals meeting Cairns
- College of Teachers Study Group Meetings - weekly for approx. 2hrs plus once a term full day school based PD sessions covering the following topics:
  - Behaviour management - the three levels of discipline
  - Child studies
  - Child Development with Lakshmi Prasanna
  - The significance of the seasons in the yearly rhythm

Total Number of Permanent Teaching Staff in 2012	Total Expenditure on Teacher PD	Average expenditure on PD per teacher
13.2	\$16415.00	\$1243.56

## Key Student Outcomes

### Average Student Attendance Rate:

Total number of students (at census)	Number of school days in program year	Total number of student absences	Average attendance rate
141	186	1783	93.2%

### Benchmark Testing Results:

The methods and intentions of a Steiner School are deep and far reaching. Like walking and talking, children learn at their own pace. We honour this process and seek to maintain the self confidence and self-esteem of each child. Testing and ranking of children is not in accord with our school ethos. Such tests can feed the egos of some, erode the confidence of others and eat into valuable teaching time as teachers must prepare students to sit tests. Non-invasive methods of assessment are used throughout each child's education.

In *Working with Curriculum in Australian Steiner Schools* (June Cunningham, 2004), the Steiner approach to assessment and evaluation is summarised:

*Steiner schools tend to be smaller than other schools and it is a central pillar of their philosophy that they are human-centred, with the development of the child's whole being as their principal focus.*

*Class Teachers teach a child for up to 8 years so they:*

- *Get to know the child well, learn the best way to approach, motivate and discipline each child*
- *Have more opportunity to observe the child's progress (no having to spend the first term each year just getting to know the class)*
- *Develop on-going close contact with parents - ideally a team atmosphere*

*Assessment can therefore be very individual and personalised:*

- *More unobtrusive and informal, with few if any formal tests, at least until High School*
- *Emphasis is on continued learning and holistic development rather than on grading*
- *The ideal is a personalised education and development plan for each child*

***Why are Steiner Schools opposed to the current mandatory state and national testing, 2001 (excerpts)***

- *Steiner education is based on a particular understanding of child development and maturation and integration of faculties. At the core of this understanding stands a picture of a natural progression, within which are stages - not only of growth but also of levels of consciousness - physical, imaginative, intellectual. The educative process and curriculum in a Steiner school is carefully designed to support this natural progression.*
- *Introduction of skills and knowledge is therefore based on a concept of child-readiness. In the younger years, the introduction of formal literacy and numeracy skills for example is therefore delayed to allow for the fuller development of physical faculties e.g. hand-eye co-ordination, gross motor skills, fine motor skills. At this level (kindergarten and lower primary) literacy and numeracy skills are woven into activity.*
- *When introduced formally (aged 6-7), literacy and numeracy skills are woven into the curriculum in a very pictorial and imaginative way in-keeping with the forces of the imagination operating so strongly at that time. This has been proven to be a very effective approach and with long-lasting benefits.*
- *However, almost all other schools whether government or non-government, or with particular religious or cultural ethos, follow a very common and conventional approach to the acquisition of literacy and numeracy. This places Steiner schools in a unique dilemma - how do we stay true to our stated and long-standing curriculum and approach (the reason parents choose our schools and the reason teachers choose to teach in them) and yet comply with government requirements and accountability?*
- *Furthermore the concept of testing is itself very foreign to our students, particularly in the primary years. Each child is regarded as gifted in some area and tolerance and acceptance are encouraged and valued in our classrooms. "Success" and "failure" are not emphasised, rather a child is seen as being on a continuum of development which will enable him/her to fulfil his/her potential.*
- *In the schools which trialled the tests, particularly in the lower years, it was felt that in both format and content, the experience was so foreign as to render invalid the results of the tests and make them of little use either to the school or the Government.*

**At Candlenut Steiner School assessment occurs in these ways:**

- In early childhood, assessment is by teacher observation and work samples
- In the primary school, the development of the children's skills is assessed and recorded through main lesson books, class work, work samples, checklists and continuums, oral presentations, reviews and rich learning tasks.
- In the high school, students are progressively introduced to examination-style assessments alongside the other assessment modes used in other areas of the school.

**Reporting to parents occurs through bi-annual parent/teacher interviews and in written semester reports.**

***National Benchmark tests in Literacy and Numeracy:***

All schools must ensure that all students in years 3, 5 and 7 sit the NAPLAN tests unless a parent signs a conscientious objection to the test.

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## Parent Satisfaction

The school constantly communicates with parents and fosters an ongoing programme of feedback in order to gauge and maintain parent satisfaction.

Ways in which we collect feedback:

- Parent teacher conversations, evenings and one-on-one interviews
- Open Door Policy
- Transparent management
- Parent satisfaction surveys

Evidence we are doing well:

- Many of our new enrolments are the result of recommendations from current parents
- In 2011 we offered high school which has increased parent satisfaction from existing families
- Many of our classes are stable in numbers and operate with waiting lists

Some parent comments from our recent Parent Satisfaction Survey:

We were going to put our children in another school but cancelled our plans when we saw Candlenut Steiner. It is a magnificent school with many talented and amazing people involved in it.

The school and gardens in particular are exceptionally beautiful. The classrooms have a warmth and welcome feeling about them.

I'm so grateful for the presence of the school in the Cairns region. I know nothing is ever perfect but I believe that this school echoes most of the values that I feel are important in raising children and moreover strives to evolve to greater heights. I believe something is as good as its components and the relationships between the components - so it's up to us as parents to contribute to the beauty and integrity of the school. I'm sure together with the teachers we can continue to make this school a wonderful place for children and adults alike.  
Xx

My son went from struggling at a state school to being excited to go to school every day, reading and writing exceptionally well.

My children enjoy going to school every day and they enjoy the curriculum and the daily flow of school life. They are able to articulate themselves with confidence and with a wide range of words. Their self confidence has grown since they started to attend the school. Our life as a family has changed for the better - my children are happy and full of wonder and joy for life because they are being appreciated at school for which they are and not measured against their peer's performances and other stringent outcomes.

We also received some valuable constructive suggestions for improvement, which will be investigated in greater detail in the following months.

## Cyclical Review

Cyclical reviews are carried out by the Non State School Accreditation Board approximately every five years; therefore we anticipate that we will be required to carry a review out in 2013. The school welcomes these reviews as a way of ensuring that we are continually assessing and reviewing our policies and procedures to ensure that they meet all statutory requirements.



## Conclusion

2011/2012 saw a period of consolidation in terms of our academic programme. We did not take on any major building projects in the latter half of 2011 or the first half of 2012. The Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework (ASCF) received national accreditation, and the school was able to begin making use of the ASCF structures and resources. We started the year by dismantling all composite classes, and ran single stream classes from 1 to 9 for the first time in the biography of the school. This growth has also made our school a more attractive proposition to families, and our building programme has provided us with excellent facilities to support the delivery of our curriculum. We are now looking forward to the creation of the high school campus, which will begin in Spring 2012.