The School

Mansfield Rudolf Steiner School and Kindergarten Incorporated is an incorporated association formed by agreement dated 3rd July 1986.

Its registered address is at 91 Highett St, Mansfield, Victoria

Key Values

The School has determined that its key values are:

1. A non-judgmental attitude towards all people.
2. Seek to understand the situation of others.
3. Adopt a co-operative attitude in working with others.
4. Develop open communication skills.
5. Work respectfully with other people.
6. Work out of reverence for the world.
7. Strive towards goodness.
8. Appreciate beauty.
9. Work from a basis of trust.
10. Be responsible for your actions.
11. Uphold the educational philosophy which underpins Steiner Education.

Ethos

1. **IDENTITY** – Ours is an open community of Parents, Teachers and Friends dedicated to providing the education of children in the light of Rudolf Steiner’s philosophy. It is a philosophy, which is both spiritual, and practical, it strives to educate the whole person so that they may develop a deep and broad feeling life, clear and penetrating thinking and the capacity to undertake purposeful deeds.

2. **RELATIONSHIPS** – responsible communication within defined forums and guidelines, with respect for the diversity of personalities and roles. To keep our focus on the spiritual aims and purpose of Steiner education.

"Love is higher than opinion.
If people love one another the most
Varied opinions can be reconciled....
This is one of the most important tasks
For humankind today and in the future;
That you and I should learn to live together
And understand one another.
Rudolf Steiner
3. **ENHANCING LIFE FORCE/ENERGY FOR EACH ONE AND FOR ALL** – we acknowledge that we strive to act from a higher purpose: that we work with the spiritual world as described by Anthroposophy. To enhance the flow of the life force energy we have clarity of policy and procedure. We have a supportive and nourishing environment that enhances creativity. To bring form to our work with the spiritual world we work deliberately and consciously through meditation, festivals, ritual, rhythm and reflection and we have regular workshops, seminars and study groups.

4. **THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT** – reflects the philosophy of Steiner education. Our approach to the environment will be thoughtful and purposeful, with a strong sense of child. We will respect and work with the natural environment pertaining to the spirit of place, creating warmth, beauty, simplicity and reverence. The environment will nurture the natural curiosity and imagination of the child. Using natural materials, our buildings, structures and gardens will complement each other and allow thought for the future.

**Objectives**

The vision will be achieved in harmony with our values if six key objectives, “the most important things we must aim for”, are realised. These are:

1. A strong Steiner based curriculum and culture
2. Effective leadership, governance and administration
3. Qualified and committed staff
4. An involved and supportive community
5. A school of full classes at all levels
6. Quality facilities, integrated with the curriculum

The School supports and promotes the principles and practice of Australian democracy, including a commitment to elected government, the rule of law, equal rights for all before the law, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and association, the values of openness and tolerance.

**The Governance Committee**

The Governance Committee is elected pursuant to the School’s Constitution (“Founding Document”).

**The Role of the Governance Committee**

The first and primary duty of the Governance Committee is to ensure that the School’s fundamental principles embodied in its Key Values and Ethos are carried out and implemented.

The Founding Document clearly states that the Governance Committee (“GC”) of the School has the ultimate responsibility for all matters relating to the running of the School.

The Governance Committee’s role is to govern the School and not to be involved in its day to day management. It is senior management’s role to manage the School in accordance with the strategic goals set by the Governance Committee and under its direction. The Governance Committee does not have a management function.

The Governance Committee is responsible for and should determine all matters relating to policy and practice. It has overall responsibility to ensure that the School is well-managed and
that its operations are successful. It must do all things necessary to ensure that the School meets its purpose as set out in the School’s Founding Document.

Without limiting the generality of the Governance Committee’s role, its principal functions in relation to the School are to:

1. Set goals and provide strategic direction;
2. Act as an interface between the School and various members of the School’s constituency, namely the parents, the staff and the students;
3. Appoint the Principal;
4. Determine policies governing the operations;
5. Approve the annual budget and any long-term budget;
6. Approve material expenditure outside the budget;
7. Approve all items of capital expenditure in excess of $5,000;
9. Conduct an annual review of the School in meeting its objectives as set out in the Strategic Plan;
10. Review the performance of the Chair and Principal;
11. Establish and oversee the powers and functions of Governance Committee sub-committees such as the School Finance Committee, OHS Sub Committee, Buildings & Grounds Sub Committee, Publicity Committee and any other sub-committees established;

**Governance Committee Structure**

**Size**

1. The School’s Founding Document requires that there be no less than 8 nor more than 10 Governance Committee Members.

2. The Governance Committee will consist of:
   a. Nominated members
      i. Principal and Deputy Principal;
      ii. The School Business Manager;
      iii. Up to two persons nominated by the Governance Committee on the basis of required expertise; these persons may be, but are not necessarily, a parent or staff member.
   b. Elected Members
      i. Four parents or members, not being employees of the school, shall be elected at an appropriately constituted Annual General Meeting.

3. All the above shall be independent members.

**Independence**

An independent member is one who is not involved in material contracts with the School and is not an adviser to the School for fees or some benefit.

**Skills**

The skills and experience required by the Governance Committee are in the areas of
1. Accounting and finance;
2. Business;
3. Community Interest;
4. Education; and
5. Legal.
6. Pastoral Care
7. Understanding of Steiner/ Waldorf principals and practice

Term of Office

Under the School’s Founding Document Governance Committee Members are appointed for a maximum term of two years.

Governance Committee Members should not serve for longer than 4 terms.

Casual Vacancies

If a casual vacancy occurs during the year, the Governance Committee in filling that casual vacancy should endeavour to ensure that the current skills represented on the Governance Committee are assessed so that the new appointee has the same skills and experience as the departed Governance Committee Member

Governance Committee Members’ Appointment

Each Governance Committee Member will receive a ‘Governance Committee Member’s Kit’ and a letter of appointment which will include matters of importance to the School.

Governance Committee Members’ Code of Conduct

Governance Committee Members are expected to comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of the law and with the principles of this Charter.

Governance Committee Members will ensure that in fulfilling their duties they:

1. act for the benefit of the School;
2. act with skill, care and diligence;
3. demonstrate commercial reasonableness in their decisions;
4. discharge their duties in good faith and honestly;
5. do not allow personal interests to conflict with those of the School;
6. do not allow the interests of their associates to conflict with those of the School;
7. do not engage in conduct likely to discredit the School; do not make improper use of information gained as a Governance Committee Member;
8. fulfill their fiduciary duty to the School;
9. give of their expertise generously to the School;
10. make appropriate enquiries to ensure the School is operating efficiently and legally to achieve its goals;
11. undertake diligent analysis of all proposals placed before the Governance Committee;
12. and use the powers of their office for a proper purpose.
The role of the President

The President plays a key role in the School. The President is considered the captain of the team and should use skills and leadership abilities to ensure that the Governance Committee is an effective Governance Committee observing sound governance principles.

The Principal

The Principal is appointed by the Governance Committee. The Principal is responsible for the ongoing management of the School in accordance with the strategy, policies and programs approved by the Governance Committee. He/she shall manage the School to achieve the goals agreed and endorsed by the Governance Committee at all times having regard to the Key Values and School ethos.

Governance Committee Meetings

Meetings, agendas and Governance Committee papers.

The Governance Committee meetings and agenda are fundamental to good governance. The Principal must attend all Governance Committee meetings except where as part of its role, the Governance Committee meets to discuss the performance of the Principal. The meeting is critical as it is the main opportunity for Governance Committee Members to:

1. obtain and exchange information with the Principal and other management who may be present;
2. obtain and exchange information with each other; and
3. make decisions.

The agenda is important as it shapes the information flow and subsequent discussion.

Governance Committee papers should be presented to the Governance Committee Members in good time and contain all relevant information in an easy to read and understandable form to enable the Governance Committee to make decisions.

Governance Committee Process

1. accord other Governance Committee Members and their views respect;
2. act in a business-like manner;
3. act in accordance with the Founding Document;
4. raise and address issues in a confident and firm, yet friendly manner;
5. minimize chatter and irrelevant remarks;
6. refrain from interruption or interjection; and
7. use good judgment, common sense and tact when discussing issues.

Meeting frequency and time

The Governance Committee will meet at least four times per year. The Chair and Principal should present a calendar of Governance Committee meeting dates for each year in January of such year. Generally meetings will be held on the third Monday of each month that falls within a school term. In so far as possible all meetings should be physical meetings. It may, however, be necessary to meet electronically or pass resolutions by circular resolution.

Meetings will generally commence at 6:30pm.
Reports

If any of the sub-Committees have met since the last Governance Committee meeting, the minutes of such Committee meeting should be attached to the Governance Committee papers for noting by the Governance Committee. If there are any matters or recommendations which such Committee wishes the Governance Committee to consider these should be contained in a Report for consideration by the Governance Committee.

Minutes

Minutes should be circulated within two days of the Governance Committee meeting for consideration by the Governance Committee Members and must be approved at the next Governance Committee meeting.

Governance Committee Members Protection

As a general rule, a Governance Committee Member is entitled to information relevant to the School and is to be protected against the specific risks of being a Governance Committee Member.

Protocol for seeking information

When seeking information a Governance Committee Member should follow this protocol:

1. In the first instance request the Principal to provide the information;
2. If the information is not forthcoming, approach the President;
3. If it is still not forthcoming write a letter to all Governance Committee Members and the Principal detailing the information required and the purpose for seeking the information.

Access to Governance Committee papers

The complete set of Governance Committee papers of the School is held by the School Secretary on behalf of each Governance Committee Member (individually) for a period of at least seven years from the time that member ceases to serve on the Governance Committee. In the event of any legal action, investigation or enquiry by a regulatory authority, each Governance Committee Member is entitled to access the papers and any other relevant records of the School for the period during which they were Governance Committee Member even if they have ceased to be a Governance Committee Member.

The School:

1. will indemnify the Governance Committee Members to the full extent permitted by law and, in particular, subject to the Corporations Act;
2. will maintain Directors’ and Officers’ Liability Insurance and provide each Director with a copy of the policy. It will maintain each Director’s insurance for a period of seven years from the date on which each Director ceases to be a Director.

Specialist Advice
The School will reimburse a Governance Committee Member for independent specialist advice which the Governance Committee Member obtains relating to his/her duties and obligations as a Governance Committee Member on the following basis:

1. The School has not already received specialist advice on the point on which the Governance Committee Member wishes to seek advice or has not made such advice available to the Governance Committee Member or advised the Governance Committee Member accordingly
2. The Governance Committee Member first obtains the Chair’s approval to seek such advice or, failing receipt of the Chair’s approval, the approval of the Governance Committee.

Governance Committee and Principal Evaluation

It is the School’s policy to foster the development of each Governance Committee Member and the Governance Committee as a whole. Each year the Governance Committee will conduct an evaluation of its performance with a view to providing best practice governance and delivering the performance of an effective Governance Committee. The review should be conducted in the month of December and the findings tabled at the first Governance Committee meeting after the review.

It is also the School’s policy to measure the Principal’s performance against Key Performance Indicators agreed between the Principal and the Governance Committee each year.

The performance management criteria for the Governance Committee and the Principal are set out in Annexure C.

Changes or New Policies and Processes

Any changes to or introduction of new policies or processes of the Governance Committee shall be incorporated into this Governance Charter