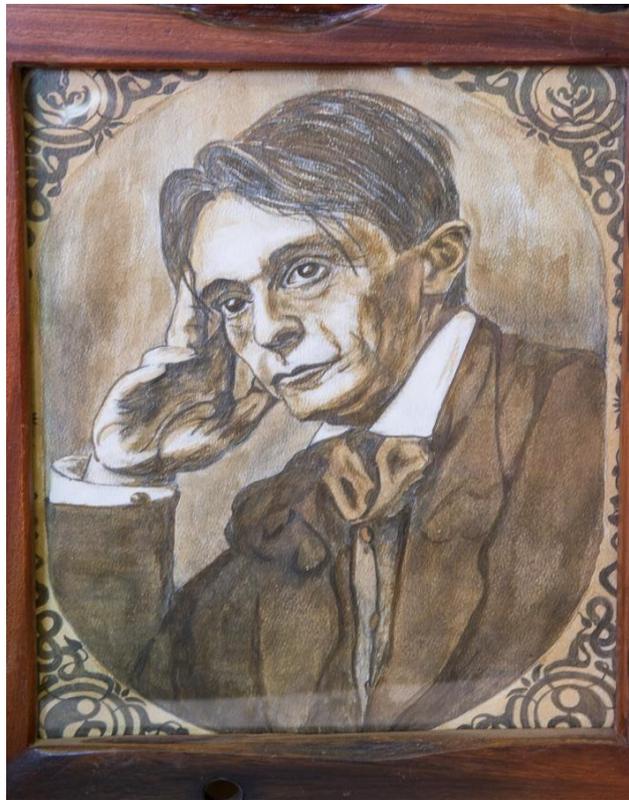




**GAIA WALDORF SCHOOL**

**PARENT HANDBOOK**

**2019**



**The healthy social life is only found  
When in the mirror of each human  
soul The whole community finds its  
reflection And when in the  
community  
The virtue of each one is living**

**- RUDOLF STEINER -**



## CONTENTS

- 1 History of Gaia
- 2 Vision
- 3 Festivals
- 4 Administration
- 5 School Hours
  
- 6 General Information
  - 6.1 Parking
  - 6.2 Security
  - 6.3 First Aid
  - 6.4 Aftercare
  - 6.5 Learner Support
  - 6.6 Extra Mural Activities
  - 6.7 The Rainbow
  - 6.8 Fundraising
  - 6.9 Snack Sales
  
- 7 School Management
  - 7.1 The College of Teachers
  - 7.2 The Board of Trustees
  - 7.3 Administration
  - 7.4 Mandates
  - 7.5 Class links
  
- 8 Communication
  - 8.1 Community Involvement
  - 8.2 Home Visits
  
- 9 Channels of Communication
  
- 10 Rhythms in the Classroom
  
- 11 School Rules and Policies
  
- 12 Fees and Payment
- 13 Student Assessments
- 14 School Meetings
- 15 Teacher Meetings
- 16 Craft
- 17 Further Reading on Waldorf Education



## 1. OUR HISTORY

Gaia is a young, innovative Waldorf School situated within the Oude Molen Farm Village in Pinelands. The school was founded in 1998 to meet the popular demand for Waldorf Education in the area and currently comprises a playgroup, two kindergartens and primary school from class 1-7.



## 2. THE GAIA VISION

- As Gaia the Earth Goddess nurtures all life on earth, so the Gaia Waldorf School strives to embrace and unfold the precious gifts of diversity in every human being.
- Our vision is to nurture and guide flexible free thinkers, who have the initiative and motivation to act with a sense of purpose and reverence within the wider community and beyond.
- To provide a Waldorf Curriculum which is reflective of the unique and diverse aspects of our South African culture by furthering the principles of education as expounded by Rudolf Steiner.
- Through Waldorf Enrichment and open communication, a healthy partnership can be created between parent and teacher, to support both the child and Gaia in its values and growth.
- To establish long term relationships within the Oude Molen Village, thus encouraging partnerships with the wider community.



### 3. FESTIVALS

Gaia Waldorf School, in keeping with all Waldorf Schools throughout the world, celebrate four main festivals annually. Each festival is prepared and expressed with a sense of beauty and reverence connecting the human being to the rhythms of nature. A sharing of seasonal stories, food, activities and music fosters a community spirit. The four main Christian festivals that Gaia celebrates share the essence of many of the world's religions in their teaching of obedience to the spiritual teachings and a love for all beings in creation.

#### Harvest Festival Easter

Autumn is the season of change, transition, variety and contrast and is visible in the weather, animal behaviour and the falling leaves. Mother Earth moves from abundance to bareness. Children experience the joys of their labours as they prepare for the festival giving thanks to Mother Earth for the bountiful gifts and drawing the children's attention to going within just as the animals do.

#### Winter Festival St John's Festival

After the hustle and bustle of summer and harvest time we are given an opportunity to experience the peace that arises from silence as we retreat into ourselves and homes for the winter. Through this peaceful silence we prepare for the new; a rebirth of light in our hearts and minds to care for the earth, ourselves and for each other.

#### Spring Festival Michaelmas

After the long winter retreat, nature awakens with new vitality. The flourishing natural forces which surround us stimulate our minds, emotions and senses to enter the world with renewed interest and purpose. After the cold wet winter we are rewarded for our patience with the warmer weather as it brings strength and vigour to our being. Spring urges us to go out into nature again and happily explore and discover anew. It is also a time for overcoming challenges and taming the dragon within.

#### Festival of Light Christmas

Christmas, regardless of one's spiritual orientation or religious affiliations is a festival which symbolizes the birth of a new consciousness in each human soul and an awakening of love, within the human soul through the Christ Child and the Nativity. Every child can connect with this story of birth and relate to it on an inner level as we are all born to earth with gifts of love and grace to share.



#### 4. ADMINISTRATION

The school office is open from 08:00 to 15:30, Monday to Friday during term time.

Phone: 021 447 0546/447 0815/447 2855

Fax: 086 516 3346

Website: [www.gaiawaldorf.co.za](http://www.gaiawaldorf.co.za)

##### **Receptionist:**

Cindy Woodman [info@gaiawaldorf.co.za](mailto:info@gaiawaldorf.co.za) or [admin@gaiawaldorf.co.za](mailto:admin@gaiawaldorf.co.za)

##### **Financial Administrator:**

Marlene Schmidlin [gaiawaldorf@mweb.co.za](mailto:gaiawaldorf@mweb.co.za) or [finances@gaiawaldorf.co.za](mailto:finances@gaiawaldorf.co.za)

##### **Enrolment Officer:**

Natheema Jacobs [enrolments@gaiawaldorf.co.za](mailto:enrolments@gaiawaldorf.co.za)

##### **School Project Officer**

Brian Klopper [schoolprojects@gaiawaldorf.co.za](mailto:schoolprojects@gaiawaldorf.co.za)

**Non - Profit Status No. 080-498**  
**Western Cape Education Department No. 010000029.**



#### 5. School Starting Times

Primary School 08:00

Playgroup Kindergarten 08:00

**Playgroup and Kindergarten Closing Time 12:15**

##### **Primary School Closing Times**

	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>Class 3</b>	<b>Class 4</b>	<b>Class5</b>	<b>Class 6</b>	<b>Class 7</b>
<b>Monday</b>	12:30	12:30	13:45	14:30	14.30	14.30	14.30
<b>Tuesday</b>	12:30	12:30	13:45	13:45	14.30	14.30	14.30
<b>Wednesday</b>	12:30	12:30	13:45	14:30	14.30	14.30	14.30
<b>Thursday</b>	12:30	12:30	13:45	13.45	14.30	14.30	14.30
<b>Friday</b>	12:30	12:30	12:30	12.30	12.30	12:30	12:30



## **Primary School Break Times**

Tea break            10:00 - 10:30  
Lunch break        12:30 - 13:00

## **Primary School Swimming**

Swimming - 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Terms

Tuesday – Classes 1,2,3 &5

Wednesday - Classes 4,6 & 7

## **6, General Information**

### **6.1 Parking**

There are two drop off points for parents and visitors: the parking lot opposite the horse paddocks and the field closest to Robin Trust. Parents and visitors are asked to respect the sign boards of parking for Robin Trust staff and visitors only.

### **6.2 Security**

The school has two full-time security guards to patrol the school premises during school hours and chaperone the playgroup, kindergarten and upper primary children to the aftercare in the lower primary.

### **6.3 First Aid**

The school has a basic first aid kit in the office and a sick room for the children. First aid trained staff can administer suitable treatments for minor grazes, injuries and headaches. Parents may be contacted to collect children if unwell. The school is affiliated to the Vincent Pallotti Hospital and a paramedic can be called out for incidents of a more serious nature. Parents will be contacted immediately.

Periodically an outbreak of lice occurs and notification will go out to parents requesting that they check their children's hair and treat if necessary before returning to school. A child should not return to school until both nits and lice are clear.

### **6.4 Aftercare**

The school has a pre-primary and primary aftercare times which operates from 12:30 to 17:30. Parents are asked to respect Aftercare closing time as teachers have their own families to care for. Collection of children after 17:30 will attract a late collection fee of R50 per 15 minutes. A small meal is provided, but each child is asked to bring a small snack and fruit. Parents, relatives or taxi services are asked to collect the children inside the school premises and to sign the register before taking the child home.

### **6.5 Learner Support**

Learner Support is provided by a teacher who works in a private capacity. Children needing support are referred by the class teacher. Suitable time slots are set up between support teacher and child during school hours. Accounts are sent out separately from the school and teachers. If you do not wish your child to have these support lessons, or if you cannot afford the fees, please notify the teacher immediately as there is usually a waiting list for these support lessons.



## **6.6 Extra Mural Activities**

Gaia offers the following private extra mural music and sport activities: guitar, recorder and violin for primary school children.

## **6.7 The Rainbow**

The Rainbow, our bi-weekly newsletter, is distributed on a Friday via e-mail or hard copy for those that don't have access to e-mail. Parents can subscribe to the newsletter by going to the Gaia website and clicking on the 'contact us' link. If you wish to receive a hard copy, contact the office.

The Rainbow is an important means of communicating school events, information linked to Waldorf Education, advertisements of workshops, smalls and a special editorial written by teachers, staff and parents. The editor welcomes contributions and will use her discretion to publish the content or request depending on the availability of space. There are notice boards at both entrances to the school where information is also placed.

## **6.8 Fundraising**

There are two fundraising events during the year; a Big Walk and Spring Fayre. Everyone in the community is expected to attend and contribute in some way. Money raised from these events goes towards designated projects planned for the year.

## **6.9 Snack Sales**

All classes supply and sell healthy snacks, throughout the year. Proceeds from the snack sales go towards fee assistance.

## **7. School Management**

The Gaia Waldorf School is an Association bound by its own constitution. The Association comprises of the parents and guardians of children at the school, all teachers, employees and staff, along with honorary members who actively support the school. The school is also a legally constituted Educational Trust, bound by a Trust Deed. The school adopts an associative method of working and encourages collaboration between all participants in order to balance the needs of individuals and the whole school community with meeting the needs of the common good.

The Teachers, the Administration and the Mandate Groups are responsible for the "doing" within the school. The College of Teachers and the Board of Trustees are responsible for making sure things get done, the "governance" within the school. The ultimate legal authority lies with the Board of Trustees.

BOT comprises of a minimum of three Teachers, three Parents and one co-opted independent appointee. The Trustees will elect their Chairperson. COT will nominate three Teachers to be Trustees. The Gaia Waldorf School Association will nominate and elect the three parents to be Trustees. Elections will be held at an Annual General Meeting of the Association. The teacher Trustees and the parent Trustees will co-opt independent appointee(s).

Trustees will have to meet certain eligibility criteria to qualify and will then be encouraged to stay in office for a minimum of three years. They will retire by rotation, but if eligible may be re-elected.

### **7.1 The College of Teachers**

Chairing of meetings is rotated annually by the teachers.

The College of Teachers carry the vision of the school and uphold the pedagogical ideals. They share responsibility with the Board of Trustees of carrying out governance and management functions within the school.

### **7.2 The Board of Trustees**

Chairperson: Shervaan Rajie

The Board of Trustees share responsibility with the College of Teachers for the governance of the school, specifically; the setting of policy, financial management, the legal aspects of the school and to oversee the school's strategic plan.

### **7.3 Administration**

The administration provides administrative support to teachers, board members and the various Mandate Groups along with the day to day financial matters of the school.

### **7.4 Mandate Groups**

Both the College of Teachers and Board of Trustees hold responsibility for various mandates such as finances, marketing, craft, premises, IT and fundraising. Parents who have a particular skill or passion can contact the office for more information.

The ***Finance*** Mandate is responsible for the setting of annual budgets, financial monitoring and management reporting of the school's fiscal performance.

The ***Fundraising*** Mandate is responsible for the planning and execution of the school's fundraising programme. This will involve the appointment and coordination of parents and volunteers for each event along with the management of events on the day.

The ***Fee Assistance*** Mandate is responsible for generating funds for school bursaries.

The ***Premises & Maintenance*** Mandate is responsible for the selection, development, rehabilitation and repair of the school buildings and site. This group is also responsible for Health and Safety issues within the school.

The ***Marketing and Public Relations*** Mandate is responsible for raising awareness of the school, its activities and events. This will involve a mix of media exposure, editorial, brochures, adverts, posters and the upkeep of the school's Web Site.

The **IT** Mandate Group is responsible for the upkeep of the school's computers and network and for providing IT solutions and assistance.

The **Craft** Mandate Group is a new group this year. It wishes to create a circle of skilled crafters to create authentic and beautiful Waldorf toys and ornaments.

The **Parent Forum** Mandate Group provides for active participation amongst the parent body, to represent their views and interests as a constituent body of the school. The Parent Forum acts as a sounding board for suggestions, concerns, questions and opinions that may arise in the parent community.

## **7.5 Class Links**

The class link is selected by the consensus of the whole class community and the teacher/guardian of that class. Parents do not always know each other well enough in a new class to nominate a class link, so in the first term the teacher may ask a particular parent to act as the class link until the first class meetings have taken place.

## **8. Communication**

### **8.1 Community Involvement**

It is essential for parents to attend parent evenings, whole school meetings and festivals as these events are offered to parents as a means of building community and communicating with the faculty.

### **8.2 Home Visits**

Waldorf Schools have a policy of home visits, recognising the importance of the home situation in the child's development. Both teacher and parent support one another in guiding and nurturing the child in a holistic way.

## **9. Channels of Communication**

All non-educational matters can be brought in person or by letter to reception, who will direct the question to the appropriate person. The correct procedure with any educational query or concern is the following:

### **First Step**

Approach your child's teacher. Teachers always make themselves available to discuss any concerns or problems you or your child may be experiencing. Make an appointment with the teacher; please do not try to discuss these matters in lesson time or just before school starts.

The matter is to be kept confidential and MAY NOT be discuss on social media or in a manner that shares sensitive personal information of any particular child with third parties.

### **Second Step**

Should you or the teacher have difficulty in resolving the matter, it will be referred to the faculty concerned - Playgroup, Kindergarten or Primary School.

### **Third Step**

If it is deemed necessary by the faculty or the parent, the issue can be brought to the attention of the College of Teachers, by writing directly to the College. The communication relative to the issue identified by the parent should be limited to engagements with COT at this stage. The College of Teachers will correspond directly with the parent thereafter.

### **Final Step**

In the unlikely event that the matter is not resolved by COT or if the parent or teacher is not satisfied with the manner in which the issue was resolved, the matter may be referred to BOT for final determination. The parties should submit written statements relevant to the issue and may be invited to a BOT meeting to amplify their statements or reports before a final determination is made by BOT.

## **10. Rhythms in the Classroom**

### **Playgroup**

Playgroup is usually the child's first educational experience in a group and away from home. It aims to provide a nurturing environment where children can make the gentle transition from home life to a rhythmical routine within a social group at school. Therefore, a warm, loving and homely environment is ideal for playgroup. In this way the child feels held and this allows them to play freely and creatively and they begin to engage in interactive, co-operative play with one another.

The year begins quite slowly, building towards a daily routine based largely around play, the true work of a young child. Into this are woven activities such as painting, drawing, baking and cooking. Morning ring also forms part of the routine including simple stories, songs, verses and movement of a nature appropriate for 3 and 4 year olds. A special story time brings a close to each morning.

Craft and handwork are usually left for the Kindergarten but sometimes introduced in a very simple way. The seasons form the basis of the classroom content and each term ends with a building up towards a seasonal festival. This celebration includes creating special crafts, singing songs, listening to stories and feasting.

### **Kindergarten**

The kindergarten child learns largely through imitation. They imitate not only the teacher and her actions, but the environment as well. It is therefore important for the teacher to speak and act with consciousness. The surrounding environment is also of great importance, filled with beauty and richness. The classroom is cared for as a special place where an element of beauty and wonder can be experienced. A rich supply of natural materials provides scope for imagination in play, which overly detailed toys often deny.

Activities are carefully chosen and the children paint, draw and model with beeswax or plasticine. Hands are also kept busy with special handwork and crafts. Singing and music are also important aspects of the kindergarten. Each day unfolds in a particular routine and rhythm. This allows the child to feel safe and secure in the environment as well as encouraging a healthy sense of stability within their own being.

Play is central to the kindergarten where formal intellectual or academic schooling is purposefully reserved for the primary school years. Free creative play is considered the best preparation for self-realising adult life. This allows for the development of strong bodies and encourages imagination and creativity.

Play is also where children learn social interaction, leadership, co-operation and problem solving. Although freedom is essential in play, the teacher will also intervene and give guidance where play becomes destructive or unfocused.

Building and creating a deep sense of reverence for nature and its creatures is at the heart of the kindergarten. This is brought through seasonal nature stories, songs and activities. Each term comes to an end with a seasonal festival. This is a unique celebration incorporating particular songs and stories, and is a culmination of some weeks of preparation. It is a joyous occasion held with a deep sense of reverence.

Young children develop primarily in their doing, learning through imitation and physical activity. They are not yet ready for more formal classes. Thus the formal teaching of letters and numbers are reserved for the child's next developmental stage, signalled physically by the change of teeth, at about the age of seven.

### **Primary School**

The teacher is challenged to enliven classroom activities with movement, colour, poetry and living imagery. In the lessons there is a balance between listening, speaking and doing, between humour and seriousness, taking in, transforming and giving out.

The breadth of the Waldorf School curriculum is only possible through the main lesson system in which one content subject is taught in depth every day for a period of 3 or 4 weeks at a time. The rest of the timetable follows a regular rhythmic pattern where painting, handcraft, games, Eurythmy and the second languages of Xhosa and Afrikaans are brought to the child. Language and Mathematics require constant repetition and are consolidated on a regular basis in the running/practice lessons. New concepts of Mathematics, English literature and grammar are introduced through the main lessons and then subsequently consolidated with regular practice periods.

Each subject in the curriculum has a moral and an intellectual content. The child is led through the kingdoms of mineral, plant and animal which are all related to man bringing a balance of science and art where the child slowly develops an attitude of wonder, reverence and gratitude which in turn leads to an enthusiasm and affirmation of life.

## **11. School Rules and Policies**

### **Dress Code**

As we do not have a school uniform it is essential to come to an understanding of what it means to be appropriately dressed for school. Children come to school to learn and to work and should be dressed for this purpose. Children can be made to understand that there is a difference between school and recreational clothing.

Clothes must be undamaged (not torn or frayed), comfortable and allow free and safe movement. Clothes that are far too big or too tight not only inhibit this movement but also necessitate unnatural postures to keep them on.

**The following are not allowed:** short and low cut tops and hipsters that do not cover the midriff, halter-neck tops/dresses as the shoulders should be covered at all times. Make-up, this includes nail polish, dyed or highlighted hair. Printed clothing i.e. slogans, logos and advertisements and character costume clothing e.g. Spiderman, superman, etc are not permitted, plain white, coloured and patterned T shirts are permitted. Girls may wear skirts or shorts as long as they measure a hand span from the knee up the leg. If shorter than this they need to wear ski pants underneath.

Long hair must be tied up and away from the face. Jewellery may not be worn to school.(this includes bracelets, ankle chains, dangling ear rings and nose rings) Children with pierced ears may wear small sleepers and small studs. Shoes have to be worn to and from school and should be comfortable. Flip-flops (no heel support), high-heels or platform shoes are not allowed. Bear in mind that clothing is likely to get wet and/or dirty due to outside play and therefore clothing needs to be appropriate in the likelihood of such events.

During swimming lessons, boys are not permitted to wear Speedos and girls need to wear full bathing costumes at all times.

**Please note: No logos, brands, slogans and characters are permitted on any clothing at all including hats, swimming costumes, gumboots and trousers.**

### **Sun Protection**

Warnings are broadcasted repeatedly through the media, about the dangers of sunburn, especially to small children. All children must wear a sun hat at school.

### **Food**

Pre-primary children are provided with a wholesome meal; a different grain for each day of the week and fruit which the children bring. In after-care children need to bring a snack, juice and fruit. Foods and drinks with preservatives, sugar and colourants should not be sent to school. Whole-wheat sandwiches, vegetable snacks, fruit, nuts and yoghurt are recommended. Chewing gum of any kind is not allowed

## **PUNCTUALITY, ABSENTEEISM AND LATE ARRIVALS**

Late arrivals cause a disruption to the rhythm and routine not only to the child but to the class as a whole, and the teacher. It is very difficult to work with a child who is in and out of school and it brings insecurity, unease and restlessness to the class. Playgroup and kindergarten children can be dropped off as early as 08:00 and arrive no later than 08:30.

For the Primary School children there is teacher supervision from 07:45 and school begins promptly at 08:00. Parents are responsible for their children if they are dropped off before 07:45. If a child is going to be absent from school parents are required to notify the school at the latest, by 08:30. Absenteeism from school for more than a day, and any extra time off school, we require a letter or telephone call explaining the child's absence.

## **TELEVISION**

Television viewing requires little concentration, lames the capacity for creative imagination, encourages passivity and creates the expectation of instant gratification. This works directly against the holistic, participatory, imaginative and self-initiated activities, which are fundamental to Waldorf Education.

Since research has proven that TV in excess creates behavioural problems, escalates learning difficulties, reduces concentration skills and robs children of the will and skill to play healthily, we have a policy of recommending no television viewing for children during the week and age appropriate viewing on the weekend, preferably none for pre-school children.

## **CELLPHONES**

Children are not permitted to bring cellphones to school unless they are reliant on public transport and need to have a means of communication for their own safety. Children are required to bring their cellphones to the office for safe keeping.

## **ALCOHOL AND SMOKING**

No alcohol will be served or sold at any school function. The school is a smoke free zone.

## **12. School Fees and Payment Due Dates**

The fee schedule is available from the office or on the website. Electronic transfers or stop orders are the preferred method of payment. Fees are scheduled over 11 months from January to November. School fees are due no later than the 7<sup>th</sup> of each month. Kindly view conditions of payment of fees on the financial contract for further details.

## **13. Student Assessment and Reports**

Communicating effectively with teachers is an essential aspect of the pupil's educational well-being. Teachers make themselves available to discuss any queries or concerns parents may have.

The Playgroup and Kindergarten teachers provide parents with a verbal report on the child's developmental, emotional and social progress. Children who transfer to another school or who are proceeding to Class 1 in the school receive a written report.

In the third term the Kindergarten Teacher/s together with an independent specialist conducts a School Readiness Test, a screening by an Optometrist and Speech/Hearing Therapist. A child proceeding to Class 1 must have turned 6 years of age before October of the year before.

The Primary School children receive a mid-year report and a detailed end of year report. Continual assessments are done from Class 1 - 7. From class 4 onwards tests are given after the completion of main lessons. In the third term a representative from the Federation of Waldorf Schools conduct Class Standards Tests in Classes 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7. Results of the test, gives the teacher an indication of what further work or support is needed. If needed, the teacher will report back to the parents.

## **14. School Meetings**

There are two meetings during the year that parents are encouraged to attend. These are the Whole School Meeting in the first term which provides an opportunity for the College of Teachers and Board of Trustees to formally introduce themselves and the Annual General Meeting in the fourth term to bring an overview of the schools development and a financial review.

## **15. Teacher Meetings**

College meetings take place on a Tuesday and Thursday to deal with the day to day running of the school and to come together to enrich and deepen their work through the study of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education.

## **16. The Craft Corner**

The school has a small cabinet in the office where various handcrafted goods can be purchased alongside pencils, crayons, fountain pens and inks needed by the children. The Craft Corner is open during office hours.



## **17. Further Reading on Waldorf Education**

The Following books are highly recommended to gain further insights into Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education as you embark upon the journey with your child, teacher and school community. These books are available at the Basil Gibaud Library.

Address: 18 Firfield Road Plumstead

Tel: 021 761 9600

E-mail: [info@aswc.org.za](mailto:info@aswc.org.za)

Website: [www.aswc.org.za](http://www.aswc.org.za)

## **Anthroposophy**

- Theosophy by Rudolf Steiner
- The Study of Man by Rudolf Steiner

## **Waldorf Education**

- The Modern Art of Education by Rudolf Steiner

## **Child Development**

- The First Three Years of the Child by Karl Konig
- The Way of the Child by A.C. Harwood
- Encountering the Self (transformation & destiny in the ninth year) by Hermann Koepke
- Adolescence: Between Form and Freedom by Betty Staley