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School Background

Our school had its origins in 1988 and some of the school’s founding group are still actively involved in teaching and governance for our school. We are fortunate to own a beautiful and sizable parcel of land surrounded by forest, yet a 10 minute bike ride into town, allowing us to enhance our curriculum with provision for environmental lessons, gardening and active adventure.

Our school offers schooling from 0-Class 6, and for this year as a transition for Year 7 to high School we are offering a 6 Consolidation Class due to the request of parents and with Ministerial consultation. We have predominantly single-streamed classes in purpose-built classrooms and a beautiful school hall. The school has grown in student population with expected growth continuing over the coming years.

Values

Golden Hill’s pedagogy arises from the inspirations of Dr. Rudolf Steiner and subsequent developers of Steiner -Waldorf Education. We value education that is balanced between teaching to ‘head, heart, and hands’, is compassionate, sustainable, inclusive, and allows children to fully experience each unique stage of their development.

Steiner pedagogy recognises, and specifically tailors its programmes, to three key phases of development as relevant to the school-aged child. The first is from ages 0-7 where the will life is developed and the powers of imitation are attuned. During the next seven years the child learns skills that will enhance their skills of judgement through creating beauty, which is why creative pursuits and models are a key element in our curriculum. As children grow from 14 to adult they can more consciously develop and hone their unique individual abilities reasoning and judgement develop.

We value an education which allows children to be children and mature wholly by offering carefully thought out experiences and guidance appropriate to each phase that are environmentally sound, creative, respectful of all and bring forward material in a truly inspiring and beautiful way. Golden Hill Steiner School is a full member of Steiner Education Australia and AISWA, and we predominantly teach according to the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework (ASCF). KLAs for LOTE, Health and Physical Education and IT are taught according to the Integrated Golden Hill Steiner Curriculum. The draft ASCF Arts curriculum is being reviewed for use at Golden Hill as it is approved by ACARA.
1. Professional Engagement

During 2014, our school employed 13 teachers, including 6 full-time teachers and 7 part-time representing an 8.9 FTE equivalent. Additionally, we employed at least 2 Educational Aides and various ancillary/cleaning staff during the year.

a) Teaching Staff Attendance

The percentage of teacher attendance reflecting both sick and carer's leave taken was 95%.

b) Teaching Staff Retention

The regional/remote location of the school means there is a higher transient population in Denmark than other Steiner Schools in Australia. Our staff retention rate was 81.5%.

c) Teaching Qualifications

All teaching staff were registered as members of the Teacher Registration Board WA. The following is a summary of their qualifications:

• 2 Steiner Education
• 3 Bachelors of Education
• 1 Master of Education
• 2 Bachelors of Arts or Arts/Law
• 1 Bachelor of Fine Arts
• 1 Bachelor of Business
• 1 Bachelor of Social Science
• 1 Bachelor of Science
• 1 Diploma in Natural Horsemanship
• 1 Bachelor of Civil Engineering
• 10 Graduate Diplomas Education/Teaching
• 1 Diplomas in Educational Studies
• 1 Certificate IV in Woodcraft
• 2 Certificates in TESL/TEFL
• 2 Certificates IV in TAE
• 1 Certificate IV in Business
• 2 Certificates of Anthroposophical Studies
d) Teacher Professional Development

Teachers enjoy a generous professional development provision to attend Steiner Teacher Intensive courses on the East Coast or to attend other conferences or trainings. The average spending per teacher was $747.

The total school spending on teacher professional development was $6500.

This is an important part of ensuring staff morale in our isolated setting, and ensures that our teachers keep connected with colleagues from other schools, best practise and creative developments in Steiner Education.

Courses included:
• Steiner Teachers' Music conference
• Glenaeon Teacher Training Intensives
• Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden
• Earthside Education
• Sue Larkey Autism and Aspergers' workshop
• Painting workshops
• Mindful Matters
• Foundations of Steiner Education (Sydney Rudolf Steiner College) training modules
• Early Childhood Steiner Education training modules
• WA Steiner Early Years seminars
• Senior First Aid Training
• Steiner Education Australia Delegate’s Meetings
• SEA Consultancy visits
• Individual Class and Child Studies
• Anthroposophical Society conferences
• AISWA inservices
• AISWA Good Governance training

2. Student Outcomes

a.i) Student Attendance
The average daily attendance for 5 year old and pre-primary students was: 85%
Class 1 attendance: 91%
Class 2/3 attendance: 87.5%
Class 4/5 attendance: 87%
Class 6/7 attendance: 92.5%

Overall, this gives a weighted attendance rate of 89%.
a.ii) Managing Student Absences

The school has a detailed Attendance Policy and clear procedures. Student absence is predominantly due to illness, and for family trips due to the long distance to a capital city and the high number of FIFO families in our school community. Students are encouraged to take half days rather than whole days off for family reasons wherever possible. Attendance is recorded at 9am and 1.30 pm. Parents are requested to phone through to the office on the day of absence if their child is away or late for any reason. The Office Manager follows up unexplained absences or unexplained lateness on the day with a phone call to parents.

a.iii) Post-School Destinations

This year was an exception, with many students choosing to stay with us to be in the Year 6 Consolidation Class. Other students chose Denmark High School, Great Southern Grammar and St. Joseph’s College in Albany, with the Denmark Agricultural College available from year 11.

b) Student Assessment

We provide adequately for NAPLAN testing at this stage, however parents at our school often withdraw their children from NAPLAN testing in Year 3. This is due to parental philosophical objections and the fact that curriculum matching is not present with ASCF and AC until the end of Year 3, which parents and the media anecdotally report has caused stress. Even in Years 5 and 7 there are low numbers participating in this testing, meaning the school’s results are statistically invalid.

We are beginning to create our Student Assessment and Reporting Policy as part of our whole Faculty Reflective focus. This will result in us creating a whole school plan for collecting, recording and tracking on benchmarks in the ASCF for each individual student and providing learning support intervention and faculty support to address weaknesses.

3. School Income, broken down by funding source

Australian Government recurrent funding $759,066.00
State/Territory Government recurrent funding $206,292.00
Fees, charges and parent contributions $261,370.00
Other private sources $92,941.00
Total gross income (excluding government capital grants) $1,319,669.00
4. Value Added Schooling

Golden Hill Steiner School is an integral part of the wider Denmark Community, and we are enriched by the many connections this brings us. The use of our beautiful school hall by many community groups throughout the week is contributing to this.

Ways in which our students have enjoyed a rich educational experience include:

• Class Camps, from Classes 4-7.
• Bike Safely to School Day.
• Swimming Scheme.
• Parent-Teacher Meetings for which we provide childcare.
• Surfing lessons at Ocean Beach for senior students.
• Snake safety/awareness demonstration.
• Greek Olympics with WA Steiner Schools.
• Kitchen Garden Programme.
• Various local excursions.
• We celebrate the beginning of the school year with the “Rose” Ceremony, when new staff and families are welcomed, new children introduced by name, and the Class seven children present each class 1 child a flower on their entry to Primary School.
• “Stepping-Stones” ceremony for children moving from Kindergarten to Primary School.

5. Parent and Community Engagement

Golden Hill Steiner School is considered an integral part of the wider Denmark Community, and we are enriched by the many connections this brings us. The use of our beautiful school hall by many community groups throughout the week is contributing to this. The hall is used to host Yoga, martial arts, philosophical talks, meditation and more.

• Our school enjoys the wider community and tourists coming to us every second Friday for the Kwoorabup farmers’ and crafts markets.
• Our families enjoy our revived working bees which provide a sausage sizzle and social opportunity.
• Musical instrument-making workshops.
• Study groups on Anthroposophy (philosophy underpinning Steiner Education) for parents.
• Christmas Craft and felting workshops.
• Kids Town WA ‘Cubbies for Christmas’ project.
• We often invite outside groups or individuals to our festivals.
• Senior citizen visits to the school.
• Visits to Albany and Denmark libraries.
• We have a parent library split over three locations in the school, to encourage parents to deepen their understanding of our pedagogy and child development.
• A playgroup operates for children aged 0-3.
• In depth parent-teacher meetings are held in winter and at the request of parents to
engage with student achievements and address challenges.

- Parents are welcome to volunteer and visit classrooms after school. Parents attend handwork classes and assist for 1:1 reading and practical subjects like woodwork, gardening and building lessons.
- Community and Parent volunteers generously assist with Environmental committees, Governance, and pastoral care in the role of “Class Teacher Helper”, which a different parent is asked to fill for each class each year. This role serves to assist families maintain positive links with the school, and provides the teacher with valuable support with rosters, cleaning assistance etc.

6. Satisfaction Survey Results

This year the satisfaction survey indicated great happiness with the teaching and learning at our school. In October, 2014, each family in the school community was asked to respond to 31 “tick box” questions and 4 written answer questions. 43 families responded before the cut-off date, which was over 60% of the families in this community. The results were overwhelmingly positive about the school and this was a real vote of confidence from the parents about the standard of education being received at Golden Hill Steiner School.

The highlights in the survey were that 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their child enjoyed going to school, 95% agreed or strongly agreed that the school is a safe and secure environment, 97% agreed or strongly agreed that the teachers were professional, committed and enthusiastic and finally, 78% of you strongly agreed that your child’s teachers provide a stimulating learning environment and make school work interesting and enjoyable. These are enormously positive endorsements for the way this school is doing its core business.

All questions were designed to invite a positive response and 3/4 of the questions had at least 75% of the parents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the question asked. Parents’ positive responses extended from agreeing that we encourage a sense of self-worth, clear positive goals, fair treatment by approachable teachers, and an amazing 91% stated you were satisfied with the overall educational progress of the child(ren) at our school. Only 2 questions had 10% or more disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and these centred on the school seeking parents’ opinions about educational programmes and the school being well organised and running smoothly. None of the questions had more than 2 people strongly disagreeing with the proposition.

Areas that prompted more neutral responses centred around bullying, responding to issues of prejudice, consistent behaviour management and enforcing of discipline rules and consequences, timely information when a child has a problem and finally, how easy it has been to understand school reports.

The survey clearly shows there is no statistically significant strong, burning issue held by
the large proportion of the community. Focus areas to note in the coming year from the survey centres around the way the school organises itself and behaviour management.

Amongst the written comments the only recurring negative theme was around communication, particularly about progress of planned changes.

A full copy of the results of this survey can be viewed at the school office.