

# Family Handbook 2024



**Periwinkle**

PRESCHOOL

for Rudolf Steiner  
early childhood education



# Quick Reference Information

(Please remove this page and put up on your noticeboard)

Periwinkle Preschool  
5 Sunrise Boulevard,  
Sunrise Beach,  
Byron Bay NSW 2481

Ph/Fax: (02) 6685 8898  
After Hours: 0488 047 122  
E: [info@periwinkle.nsw.edu.au](mailto:info@periwinkle.nsw.edu.au)  
W: [www.periwinkle.nsw.edu.au](http://www.periwinkle.nsw.edu.au)

Your child's group is:

Your child's teachers are:

Your child's start date is:

Your child's days are:

## **Preschool hours**

Monday to Friday: 9:15 am – 3:15 pm

## **Office/Accounts enquiries**

Wednesday: 8:15am – 4:15pm

Thursday: 8:15am – 4:15pm

Friday: 8:15am – 4:15pm

## **Newsletter submissions**

Email: [info@periwinkle.nsw.edu.au](mailto:info@periwinkle.nsw.edu.au)

## **Parent Information Evenings** *(please diarise in advance)*

Orientation Evening:

Parent Information Nights: TBA

## **Parent Management Committee Meetings**

Annual General Meeting:

Committee Meetings: Monthly (dates and times to be advised)

Executive Committee Contact Details (on Periwinkle noticeboard):

Name

Phone No.

Email

# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Arakwal people,  
of the Bundjalung Nation,  
as the traditional custodians  
of the land on which Periwinkle stands.

We pay our respects to elders past, present, and emerging.



# Welcome

Dear Families,

Periwinkle offers a home-away-from-home environment for children aged three to five, with a play-based program that values the importance of self-initiated play, artistic work and household activities to meet the needs of what is an active and imitative stage of childhood.

Our daily rhythm explores the joyous and wondrous experience of the seasons and special occasions through music, storytelling and family festival celebrations. The young child, as an implicit learner, is nourished and guided through their daily learning experiences. We offer to ferry your little ones in a warm and loving boat across the sea from home to school.

We extend a warm welcome to you and your child and want you to feel an important part of our preschool community.

Periwinkle Director and Staff

“The preschool years, the kindergarten years, (the years before formal schooling) are the most important of all in the education of the child.”

“It is absolutely essential that before we begin to think, before we so much as begin to set our thinking in motion, we experience the condition of wonder.”

**Rudolf Steiner**

# Contents

## **The Centre**

Periwinkle History	5
Periwinkle Philosophy	6

## **The Day-to-Day**

Hours of Operation	7
What to Bring	8
What to Do When You Arrive with Your Child	9
What to Do When You Collect Your Child	11
Emergencies	12
General Information	13

## **The Program**

Daily Routine	16
Festivals and Celebrations	17
Birthdays	18

## **The Parent Community**

The Role of the Parent	19
What Parents Can Do at Home	21

## **Administration**

Enrolment Policy	22
Fees	23
Health Policies	26
Feedback, including Complaints	28

## **Resources**

Blessings, Verses and Prayers	29
Recipes	31

## **Reading**

Periwinkle Preschool Handbook	3
-------------------------------	---

The Essentials of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education	34
Toys	41
What about TV?	44
Thinking about Clothes	46

# THE CENTRE

## Periwinkle History

Periwinkle was founded in February 1986 by Susan Perrow, inspired by Australia's first Steiner 'Vital Years Conference' held in Sydney the previous year. Periwinkle's first home was a rented church hall in Bangalow. Initially one group of 14 children attended two days per week, but this soon grew to two groups of 16 children, both for two days per week. In 1990, the preschool moved for two years into the Moller Pavilion in Bangalow showground.

Meanwhile, a location was being negotiated for Periwinkle's permanent home in Sunrise Beach, Byron Bay. The Byron Shire Council granted Periwinkle a 25-year lease on the land, at the cost of \$1 per week. With much community support and fundraising, the Periwinkle staff and parent committee slowly worked on constructing and completing the beautiful Periwinkle building that is still used today.

In February 1992, a very excited group of families, in a cavalcade of cars and trucks laden with furniture and equipment, drove down the highway from Bangalow to Sunrise Beach to help with the 'final' move. At the opening ceremony, as the Byron mayor Ian Kingston planted a frangipani tree in the front garden, a chain of flowers was placed in a circle around the tree while the 300 attendees sang 'May the Circle be Unbroken'.

Today the Periwinkle 'circle' continues to grow in strength and beauty. Periwinkle now caters for two groups of children, who attend for a five-day fortnight: the Wattle Group attends Mondays, Tuesdays and alternate Wednesdays; the Banksia group attends Thursdays, Fridays and alternate Wednesdays. Hundreds of children from all over Byron Shire have come through Periwinkle's doors, and some of these children are now sending their own children to benefit from its quality early childhood program.

The years have seen ongoing improvements and additions to Periwinkle's facilities, made possible by many more committed parents, staff members and community members.

In 2015, as the end of Periwinkle's lease drew closer, arrangements were again made with the Byron Shire Council – this time enabling Periwinkle to purchase its land, ensuring its ongoing place in the community.



## Periwinkle Philosophy

Periwinkle's approach to early childhood education is guided by the indications of Rudolf Steiner – a platform from which we embrace and link our daily practices to the Early Years Learning Framework (part of the Australian Government's National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care).

Rudolf Steiner spoke about the experiences that are essential for the healthy development of the young child. These include:

- love and warmth
- an environment that nourishes the senses
- creative and artistic experiences
- meaningful adult activity to be imitated
- self-initiated free, imaginative play
- protection of the forces of childhood
- gratitude, reverence and wonder
- joy, humour and happiness, and
- early childhood educators on a path of inner development.

More information on how each of these experiences is incorporated into Periwinkle's program is provided in the article 'The Essentials of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education' in the Reading section of this handbook.

*Note: A copy of 'Belonging, Being and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia' can be accessed online at <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/2632>.*

# THE DAY-TO-DAY

## Hours of Operation

**Standard Hours:** 9:15 am – 3:15 pm, Monday to Friday.

All children attend Periwinkle for a 5-day fortnight.

(This ensures that every child has access to 600 hours of preschool education over the course of the year, which is consistent with the requirements of the NSW Government's 'Start Strong' preschool funding model.)

Children attend on either:

- Mondays, Tuesdays and alternate Wednesdays, or
- Thursdays, Fridays and alternate Wednesdays.

**Holidays:** Term dates are set according to NSW School Terms. The preschool is closed over school holidays.

**Non-Pupil Days:** Children do not attend preschool on the following days:

- The first day of the school year, to enable set up and preparation (Parents are welcome to attend on this day, to help staff prepare the gardens and preschool.)

Note: This is not applicable every year, depending on the calendar.

- The last day of the school year, for end-of-year clean-up

**Festivals:** Festivals are held four times a year (for the Autumn, Winter and Spring festivals, and the end-of-year celebration). On these days the preschool hours may be shorter, to facilitate festival set up and clean up. Dates will be advised in advance.

# What to Bring

**At the beginning of the term** please bring for your child:

- ✓ A china mug
- ✓ A pair of soft-sole indoor slippers (please see the note below)
- ✓ A blanket (during cooler months)

**Each day** please bring for your child:

- ✓ One piece of fruit (organic) for a shared afternoon tea
- ✓ A hat
- ✓ A complete change of spare clothes
- ✓ A waterproof or calico/washable bag for wet clothing
- ✓ Suitable footwear
- ✓ A suitably-sized case or bag to hold belongings

A wholesome morning tea and afternoon tea will be provided each day, prepared by the staff and children. If your child has dietary requirements, please advise the staff. While we get our full food program back up and running we ask that you please provide a simple, healthy and waste-free lunch for your child.

Please make sure your child's name is clearly labelled on all items.

Note:

Slippers can be bought directly from [sunshadowslippers.com.au](http://sunshadowslippers.com.au).

Please allow plenty of time for your order to arrive. (We recommend ordering in December of the year prior to commencing preschool, if possible.)

# What to Do When You Arrive with Your Child

Children must be accompanied into the preschool by an adult, who guides them through the following routine.

- 9:15 am      Arrive with your child (please be punctual as this is an important play and activity time).
- ✓ Sign your child in on the Attendance Sheet.
  - ✓ Check the Communication Book for any new messages.
  - ✓ Help your child put their bag into their locker.
  - ✓ Help your child put their fruit into the fruit basket.
  - ✓ Take your child to the toilet and help them wash their hands and dry them.
  - ✓ Allow your child to enter into free play or morning activity or present your child to the teacher.

***Please keep adult chatter to a minimum during this time.***

It is important that you **remember to sign your child in and out** each day.

If you wish to discuss anything of concern with your child's teacher, we advise that you email them or simply ask for a suitable time to talk. It is of utmost importance that we honour the space we are creating for the child and allow them to remain in their dream state.

## **If your child is upset**

Some children have more difficulty settling into a new environment than others and it is normal for a child to be hesitant the first few times they are left in a new situation.

We do advise that once you are ready to leave you make your departure as brief and matter-of-fact as possible. We strongly recommend that parents do not sneak off as this does not help children to build up trust, and may in fact hinder the settling process.

Time can be spent at the end of the day letting your child show you around the preschool. Please discuss any concerns you may have with the Teacher or Director.

## **If someone else will be collecting your child**

If you have arranged for someone else to collect your child, you must inform a staff member, or leave a message in the communication book, and record the person's name on the Attendance Sheet. You will appreciate that Periwinkle cannot release your child to a stranger or non-custodial parent unless previously agreed in writing.

In a custody situation, we require a Court Order if one parent is to have no rights to collect the child.

### **If your child will be absent**

If your child is sick, on holidays or unable for some other reason to attend, please advise the staff or administration via email. If you are phoning out of hours, a message can be left on the answering machine. You can also share this information on Xplor.

### **If you wish to make an appointment with the Director or teacher**

If you need to discuss something lengthy and important with the Director or teacher, please do not attempt this before or after the Preschool day. A special time together can be arranged at a more suitable time.

## What to Do When You Collect Your Child

3:15 pm Arrive to collect your child. Your child will wait inside until you arrive and then will come out to greet you.

- ✓ Collect your child's belongings from their locker.
- ✓ Check the Communication Book for any new messages.
- ✓ Sign your child out on the Attendance Sheet.

Children must be collected promptly at the end of each session. Once you have signed your child out, **you are responsible for their supervision** – staff require this time for tidying up and to meet for reflective programming.

As you depart, please keep in mind that your child will be tired from a long day of play and work.

A bell will ring to indicate it is time for all families to leave the premises.

### If you are running late

**Please phone the preschool prior to 3:15 pm if you are going to be late.**

A late fee of \$15 per 15-minute block will be imposed for lateness. Of course, if there is a reasonable explanation given by telephone before 3:15 pm, or if a real emergency has occurred, the late fee won't be incurred.

## Emergencies

Please note that our licence requires a set number of staff to be present at all times for a set number of children. This precludes a staff member accompanying a child from the premises for emergency treatment. A parent or designated guardian would be expected to attend if this situation arose.

The preschool must always have a child's parent/guardian contact numbers in case of emergencies. Please inform Administration immediately if you change your home or work address and/or telephone number.

# General Information

## Food

A wholesome, yet simple, Morning Tea, Lunch & Afternoon Tea is prepared and offered to the children. We supply all the ingredients for these shared meals. In keeping with the atmosphere, environment and activities for the children, we ensure the food we provide is of the highest quality. Where possible, organic foods are used – sometimes from our own garden! If your child has allergies, please speak to Administration.

Children need to bring a piece of fruit to share at snack time. Purified water is available for the children at all times.

## Sleeping Sheets

Your child will be allocated their own set of sleeping sheets for their entire time at Periwinkle, which will be used to cover their mattress during rest time.

## Name Labels

All clothing, bags, slippers, cup and hat must be clearly marked with your child's name.

## Clothing

We strive at Periwinkle to create a warm and gentle environment for the young children in our care and we ask for your support from home. Send your child dressed in practical, comfortable and simple clothing suitable for play with sand, water, clay, paint etc.

Please ensure your child's clothing is sun safe. We encourage loose-fitting:

- shirts with sleeves (no singlets or midriff tops please)
- dresses with sleeves
- longer-style skirts, shorts and trousers.

We ask that your child does not wear nail polish, make-up, jewellery, or TV or movie character clothing/costumes to preschool.

**Please also send a full change of clothing (multiple options) in your child's bag.** The children often become wet and sandy after outside play and need a full change. Our spare clothing supplies can vary in quantity over the year. **Packing a waterproof or calico bag every day is essential as we do not use plastic bags to send wet clothes home in.**

## Shoes

We ask that children arrive with comfortable play shoes. (Please no thongs.)



## **Hats**

Please ensure your child's hat is sun safe. This may be a:

- bucket hat with a deep crown and brim size of at least 5 cm
- legionnaire hat.

(Baseball caps or visors do not provide enough sun protection.)

## **Sunscreen**

If you wish for your child to wear sunscreen, please apply it before they come to school.

Families can also indicate on the enrolment form whether you provide consent for staff to apply a natural sunscreen to your child during the day. If there is a change to your preference, please notify a staff member so these details can be updated.

## **Hair & Nails**

Please regularly wash your child's hair and check for head lice. For children with long hair (boys and girls), it is best practice to have hair tied up on preschool days to help prevent the spread of head lice. More information on the prevention and treatment of head lice can be given on request.

We also ask that nails are kept short and clean.

## **Toys**

We ask that your child does not bring toys from home to preschool. If they are keen to share something with the group, rather encourage something of interest and beauty for our nature display or story corner.

## **Lost Property**

Please check the lost property items regularly.

## **Communication Book**

When signing your child in and out take a moment to read the communication book that has important notices and information for your attention. You are also invited to write in the book any messages for staff.

## **Parent Library**

Our parent library has many early childhood and Steiner resources available for you to borrow. Please speak to a staff member if you wish to browse the library. Books need to be signed in and out when they are borrowed.

## Screen Time

Periwinkle strongly encourages no 'screen time' for the young child. This includes television, DVDs, iPhones, computer games, children's educational laptops, and any other electronic devices.

Any time your child is engaged in screen time, their imagination is being compromised. From the Rudolf Steiner perspective, this imagination is essential for the young child's brain development:

"This work of the imagination shapes and builds the forms of the brain. The brain unfolds as the muscles of the hand unfold when they do the work they are suited for."

Please be mindful of any time your child is exposed to or engaged in screen time. We specifically ask that your child does not have any screen time on the day they come to Periwinkle Preschool.

There is an article that gives more information on the subject of television and its effect on children in the 'Reading' section of this handbook, and more detailed reading is available from the Parent Library.

# THE PROGRAM

## Daily Routine

9:15 am	Arrival: Fruit in Baskets, Acknowledgement of Country followed by Morning Song.
9:20am	Inside/Outside Play (Weather Dependant)
10:30 am	Tidy Up & Slippers on.
10:45 am	Circle
11:00 am	Morning Tea.
11:30 am	Inside/Outside Play (Weather Dependant).
1:00 pm	Tidy up
1:15 pm	Story
1:30 pm	Lunch
2:00 pm	Rest Time
2:30 pm	Wake Up/Pack Away
2:45 pm	Afternoon Tea
3:00 pm	Drawing & Inside Games
3:15 pm	Goodbye Song / Home Time.

We take our inspiration from Rudolf Steiner’s indications and the cycle of the year. Small children still have an intimate relationship with their surroundings and this is something we cultivate. A lot of our activities are therefore linked with the events of the seasons.

The education of small children is based on rhythm and repetition. We provide a variety of general activities yet adhere to a rhythmic sequence. Children feel very secure when they know what is happening next in the day. It also eliminates the need for constant verbal direction.

We try to make the child’s environment and surroundings a positive encouragement for creative play. Play is the child’s “work” – they learn to solve problems, anticipate difficulties, plan ahead, communicate with others, ask when help is required etc. It is really important therefore to create a space that allows the children to play creatively and imaginatively.

The play is arranged so as to strike a balance between free play, domestic work or artistic activities. The day is rhythmically structured and ordered providing artistic and imaginative activities (washing, sweeping, packing away) so the children can develop an understanding that our preschool stays ordered and cared for.

Another important activity at preschool is storytelling. Through storytelling the children acquire listening skills and also enter imaginatively into the events of the tales, allowing some stories to have a healing effect on certain behaviour problems.

We also offer a variety of artistic activities including painting, modelling with clay and beeswax, crayon drawing and craft. Your child will not always be bringing things home. Most paintings and drawings will be kept in a folder (one for each child) until the end of year.

‘If a child has been able to play, to give up their whole living being to the world around them, they will be able to, in the serious tasks of later life, devote themselves with confidence and power to the service of the world.’

**Rudolf Steiner**

## Festivals and Celebrations

We can also mark the rhythms of the year through the changing seasons and the coming and going of festivals. As the year weaves from one festival to another we are provided with a true reason for preparation and celebration. The children experience meaningful preparations decorating the room, completing craft, baking special treats and learning songs and verses chosen just for that particular festival. The stories that are told give the children a pictorial understanding of the festival and speak very deeply to them without our having to explain anything.

Our seasonal festivals are times when families and friends are invited to share with the children a simple ceremony, songs, stories or games. A lovely sense of community is felt during our festivals and we look forward to sharing them with you. We help develop an understanding of these seasonal festivals through our parent evenings, for it is the celebration of festivals in our community that is one of the most deeply-fulfilling experiences for both young and old.

The room has a nature table which changes with the seasons, bringing into the room a way for the children to note these changes. Autumn brings fruits, nuts, berries, grains and boughs of changing leaves. The Winter garden is bare and simple but probably the most awe provoking. Spring bursts forth with colourful flowers. Children love this table. You might let your child have a small table or display space at home to create their own nature table with nature’s treasures gathered from walks or outings.

We may also add celebrations that honour the culture or religious traditions of the families in any given year.

## Birthdays

Birthdays are a very important event for the young child and we help share this with music, poems and a simple ceremony. Periwinkle will provide a simple, healthy vanilla or chocolate cake. Both parents are welcome to join us for the ceremony. You will be given the opportunity to share with the children some photos (best if attached to a board) and a little story of your child's life.

# THE PARENT COMMUNITY

## The Role of the Parent

Periwinkle is a community-run preschool that cannot exist without parent involvement. Parents are asked to consider that, when enrolling your child in Periwinkle, you are also committing your time and energy to running and caring for our preschool. It is vital that parents fulfil their obligations throughout the year so staff can focus on providing a safe and stimulating environment for the enjoyment and education of the children. Parent involvement and community care with shared energy is what keeps Periwinkle sailing! The following section explains what we require of our parents.

### Parent Management Committee

We are a non-profit community organisation run by a management committee consisting of parents nominated at the Annual General Meeting. We are an incorporated body and are audited annually.

The preschool committee is responsible to the Department of Education and Communities. The preschool's constitution is available to all parents. The Annual General Meeting is held in February each year, to which all parents are invited and encouraged to attend. There are three executive positions elected annually: President, Secretary and Treasurer. There are other non-executive roles to be filled each year, including Caretaker, Fundraising Co-ordinator and Newsletter/Communications Co-ordinator. Meetings are held monthly.

At the beginning of Term 1, ahead of the AGM, a parent/guardian questionnaire is given to all families. In this questionnaire you can indicate areas of interest and expertise, and if you are interested in a role on the committee or taking on a support role.

The Parent Management Committee is a rewarding and fun way to get to know the other parents and to also contribute to the ongoing future of Periwinkle as a wonderful place for the children of Byron Bay.

### Parent Information Nights

Each term the Director and staff prepare an informative and fun session for the parents. These are important events for parents to attend (without children) as they help to deepen your understanding of the Steiner early childhood program and how to support your child in their development. It is expected that at least one parent from each family will attend each of these evenings.

## **Working Bees & Community Care of Periwinkle**

Periwinkle requires each family to provide two hours of community care/maintenance time per term. There are many ways in which you may contribute: we have a beautiful garden that needs tending, there are working bees which offer a chance to get together with other parents and share an active day out, building maintenance for those who are handy with tools, and a wonderful library of books that need an organised mind to catalogue and monitor lending. If you have any other ideas we would love to hear them!

Specific calls for help will be given at times.

Care and involvement from our parents will benefit not only your child but all of our children at Periwinkle. Thank you for your participation.

## **Parent Visits**

Term 1 is very much about the children taking ownership of their preschool and we ask that you settle your child and quietly depart.

In Terms 2 and 3, we welcome you to participate in the first part of our morning routine. As adults, we aim to allow children freedom from adult interaction so they may enter freely into creative play. Children enter more easily into their play when the adult is absorbed in their work. For this reason, we ask that while you are at the preschool you enter fully into a task or work. We have many on-going jobs that need an adult with helping hands to undertake:

- ◆ Polishing crayons
- ◆ Mending Toys
- ◆ Cutting paper
- ◆ Carding wool
- ◆ Rolling balls of yarn
- ◆ Washing wool
- ◆ Washing painting boards
- ◆ Cutting fruit

We can only accommodate one extra adult, so please ask if you would like to participate and we will make a time for you.

## **Keeping in Touch**

We believe that shared two-way communication between the staff and families is extremely important. The newsletter, noticeboard, communication book, and emails all aim to keep you in touch with what is happening at the preschool and in the community.

**It is important you make time to read the communication materials so you understand what is happening at the preschool and how best to support your child when they attend.**

## What Parents Can Do at Home

*Based on an extract from 'You are your child's first teacher' by Rahima Baldwin*

The rushed lives that most of us live make it difficult to provide children with an ideal world for their early childhood years. Yet there is a great deal parents can do for their children by providing an environment filled with love and warmth. By understanding a young child's development and their complete openness to their surroundings, we can do our best to provide a stable and nurturing environment within our current living situation.

- ◆ Attend to your own life and emotions. The emotional environment you create for your child is far more important than the material environment.
- ◆ Honour the spiritual element in life, especially as it is brought to you by your children.
- ◆ Work toward rhythm in family life that can support you and your children.
- ◆ Remember that imitation and repetition are the keys to the young child's learning and will support positive behaviours.
- ◆ Set limits and consistently enforce them: accept that you are the parent.
- ◆ Allow plenty of time for your child's creative free play as well as musical and artistic play. Include time for just being home and 'doing nothing'.
- ◆ Buy or make childlike toys, ones that encourage imaginative play.
- ◆ Avoid pressuring your child to be an early achiever in academics, sports or the arts.
- ◆ Continue to pay attention to what your child experiences, limiting overstimulation from loud music, movies & television.
- ◆ Avoid concerning your child with adult problems through news broadcasts, conversations and so forth.



# ADMINISTRATION

## Enrolment Policy

Periwinkle aims to provide an accessible Steiner preschool education for a diverse range of children from mixed backgrounds.

### **Funding model**

We receive funding through the NSW Government's 'Start Strong' funding model, which gives priority to children in the year before school and in greatest need. It aims to ensure every child has access to 600 hours of quality preschool education in the year before they commence formal schooling, with a further focus on ensuring participation by Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander children and disadvantaged children.

In 2023, on top of the Start Strong funding model, Periwinkle has also opted into the NSW Free Preschool program, which aims to cover the gap in which families would traditionally have to pay.

Full details of Periwinkle's term fees and levies are provided in the Fees Overview.

### **Enrolment priorities**

Based on our funding model, enrolment priority is given to:

- children aged at least 4\*
- children from Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander families, aged at least 3\*
- children from low-income families, aged at least 3\*
- children with English language needs
- children who experience disability and/or require additional support
- children at risk of significant harm (from a child protection perspective).

\*by July 31 in that preschool year

Partially-funded places can then be offered to other 3-year-old children.

As part of the enrolment process for all children, we also give consideration to:

- siblings at Periwinkle
- time on the waitlist
- pedagogy (e.g. if the family is already on a Steiner journey)
- other individual considerations, at the discretion of the Director, in line with the centre philosophy.

## Xplor

To support administration and operations, Periwinkle Preschool uses an online administration platform, Xplor. When a place is offered, families will complete an online enrolment form and create an Xplor account. Relevant links will be emailed to families.

When completing the online enrolment form, families can set up scheduled payments via direct debit to manage their account. Alternatively, one-off payments can be made on Xplor with the 'Pay now' option throughout the term.

Fees are accrued weekly, and parents can view their current balance on the Xplor app. We ask that all fees are paid in full by the end of each term. Transaction fees apply.

## Fees

### Fee Overview

#### *Enrolment Fees*

Waiting List Fee **\$30**

Enrolment Acceptance **\$200**

When a place is offered and accepted, this one-off, non-refundable fee must be paid to secure the place.

Maintenance Fee **\$200**

This will be billed in term 1. When families attend working bees, they will be refunded \$50 a term.

Association Membership **\$5** for initial two years (then **\$5** per subsequent year)

### **Standard Fees**

The Fees for 2024 will be charged according to the age group and criteria that your child fits into, and includes an additional fee of \$5 per day to cover the costs of morning tea, afternoon tea, and weekly baking activities:

**\$32** for a 4 or 5 year old (by July 31 in that preschool year)

**\$64** for a 3 year old

**\$22** for any child who meets the NSW equity loading criteria

To meet the equity loading criteria, your child must be:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background
- Low income family;
- Child with a disability or additional needs

Please let the Preschool know if one of the above criteria applies to you.

Children who attend more than one preschool can only receive one Fee Relief Payment from the NSW Government. If a family chooses to nominate a preschool other than Periwinkle, an additional **\$43** a day will be charged to cover Periwinkle’s costs. For example:

**\$75** for a 4 or 5 year old (by July 31 in that preschool year)

**\$107** for a 3 year old

**\$65** for any child who meets the NSW equity loading criteria

### **Meal Fees**

While government funding covers most of Periwinkle’s activities, the food program is unfortunately outside of this. Periwinkle still intends to run its food program for the children in 2024. The food program currently includes morning tea & afternoon tea. We ask that each family pay \$3 per day to ensure the viability of this program.

### **Enrolment Fees**

Waiting List Fee                      \$30

Enrolment Fee                              \$200

When a place is offered and accepted, this one-off, non-refundable fee must be paid to secure the place.

Association Membership              \$5 for initial two years (then \$5 per subsequent year

Annual Maintenance Fee              \$200

Refundable with attendance at working bees.

The bank details are:

**Account name: Periwinkle Preschool**

**BSB: 082 489**

**Account: 570447998**

**Reference: Child’s Name**

### **Donations Welcome**

Community donations to Periwinkle are always welcomed and greatly appreciated. The Periwinkle Children’s Centre Building Fund was established and endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient in December 2016, meaning that any donations made to the building fund are tax deductible.

Donations can be made directly to:

**Account Name: Periwinkle Building Fund**

**BSB: 082 356**

**Account: 215232212**

## Health Policies

Periwinkle must comply with State and Federal Government standards applicable to all preschools. It is important that all parents understand and adhere to the preschool's policies.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding our policies, please speak to the Director.

### Immunisation

NSW legislation requires that all children who attend preschool are fully vaccinated, on an approved catch-up schedule, or have a medical contraindication to vaccination.

Only approved Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) forms can be accepted.

Upon enrolment or re-enrolment, you must provide one of the following:

- an **Immunisation History Statement**, showing your child is up-to-date with their scheduled vaccinations, or
- an **Immunisation History Statement**, showing your child is on a recognised catch-up schedule, or
- an **Immunisation Medical Exemption Form**, certifying your child has a medical reason not to be vaccinated, or
- an **Immunisation History Statement** and an **Immunisation Medical Exemption Form**, certifying your child cannot receive some of the vaccines.

Periwinkle is required to keep a register of the immunisation status for each child enrolled, which will be stored in a secure location for 3 years from the date your child leaves the preschool.

For more information, please refer to the Immunisation section of the NSW Department of Education website.

### Infectious Conditions

Public health guidelines stipulate that a child with an infectious condition must be kept at home for a specified period of time.

We refer to the Australian Government guidelines *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5<sup>th</sup> edition)*, published by the National Health and Medical Research Council, which notes the minimum exclusion periods.

You can also access the 'Infectious diseases of childhood fact sheet' on the NSW Health website.

If your child has been in contact with any infectious or contagious disease, please contact your teacher.

### **If a child at Periwinkle has a suspected infectious condition**

The Director has the discretion to exclude a child if it is felt to be in the best interests of the individual child and the other children at the centre.

If a child has a suspected infectious condition, the Centre will:

- isolate the child from the other children
- ensure the child is comfortable and is supervised by a staff member
- contact the child's parents or, if they are unavailable, the contact person for emergencies as listed on the enrolment form.
- Inform the parents or contact person of the child's condition, or suspected condition, and ask that the child be collected from the centre as soon as possible.
- If your teacher deems a child to be too unwell to be at Preschool, parents will be phoned & we will thank you for swiftly collecting your child.

## **Medication**

Children who are taking medication must be well enough to cope with the preschool day.

All medication must be accompanied by a letter detailing the child's name, dosage and when the medication is to be administered. All medicines must be handed to the staff on arrival and the medication booklet filled in with instructions on dosage amounts and times. Please label medication clearly.

**Medicines and cough lollies must never be placed in a child's bag.**

## **First Aid**

All full time, permanent part-time and casual staff members at Periwinkle have current accredited First Aid certification appropriate to early childhood services. In addition, all full time and permanent part-time staff attend an annual CPR refresher course.

## Feedback, including Complaints

Periwinkle Preschool values the feedback of educators, staff, families and the wider community as we strive to create a service that complies with regulations while nourishing the minds, bodies and spirits of children enrolled in the program. We actively encourage open communication.

Our goals regarding feedback and complaints are to:

- engage members of the preschool community in consultation, evaluation and review of the service operation and delivery of the education and care program
- enact a fair and transparent process for receiving and responding to complaints
- communicate information about procedures associated with giving feedback or making a complaint
- respond quickly, comprehensively and confidentially to complaints.

As well as welcoming positive feedback, we also have a process for receiving and responding to complaints:

- Please lodge any complaints with the Director and/or President of the Parent Management Committee who will manage the matter with strict confidentiality and with due consideration for accountability and quality improvement.
- Educators or other staff members whom a complaint is made against, or who are involved in responding to one, will ensure that information is restricted only to those who genuinely need to be notified.
- If information specific to the complaint needs to be disclosed to others during its resolution, the complainant will be informed.
- The child of any person who makes a formal complaint about any aspect of Periwinkle's service delivery will not be disadvantaged in any way as a result of that complaint.

### **Regulatory authority**

In the event that you would like to lodge a complaint with the regulatory authority for early childhood services, contact details are as follows:

Early Childhood Education Directorate, NSW Department of Education

Address: Locked Bag 5107, Parramatta NSW 2124

Website: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education>

Email: [ececd@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:ececd@det.nsw.edu.au)

Phone: 1800 619 113 (toll free)

# RESOURCES

## Meal Blessings

Blessings on the blossoms,  
Blessings on the fruit,  
Blessings on the leaves and stems.  
A blessing on our meal & peace upon the earth.

## Acknowledgement of Country

Firmly on this ancient land we stand,  
With red, red earth & crystal white sand.  
  
We thank the elders from long, long ago,  
Who helped these lands begin to grow.  
  
Who helped gums reach high to heavens blue.  
  
Now we stand together, strong & true.

Good morning dear earth,  
Good morning dear sun,  
Good morning dear stone,  
Dear plants, flowers, everyone.  
Good morning dear animals,  
And the little birds in the tree,  
Good morning to you,  
And good morning to me.

## Prayers

*To say a short prayer at bedtime gives a great deal. The child carries it into their sleep in the form of pictures, which arise in their soul. This is real soul nourishment and can be a tremendous help to a wakeful restless child. The prayer is best said by candlelight after the bedtime story in an atmosphere of calm and reverence. The prayer should not be taught to the child; if parents say it each night, the child will soon learn it and then all can say it together.*

*This following prayer is suitable for very young children:*

As I go to sleep each night  
An Angel watches o'er me  
And fills my soul with flooding light  
And guides me to the stars so bright  
And blesses me each morning.

*And for the older child whose soul can accommodate more than one picture:*

Peeping out of heaven's height  
Like glowing candles burning bright  
The stars look down from heaven  
And guarding Angels there I see  
Making music joyously  
Always watching over me  
And sending their blessing.



# Recipes

## Simple Millet Porridge

1 cup millet

2 cups water

Optional: pinch of salt

1. Place the millet, water and salt in a pot.
2. Bring to the boil over high heat.
3. Reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and simmer gently until the grains absorb most of the water – approximately 15 minutes.
4. Remove the pot from the heat, leave covered, and let stand for 10 minutes.
5. Fluff millet with a fork and serve with toppings.

At Periwinkle, we add a drizzle of maple syrup and a splash of milk (dairy or non-dairy), and top with seasonal chopped fruit or stewed apple.

## Labneh (Yoghurt Cheese)

*Labneh is made by simply straining natural yoghurt through cheesecloth overnight to make a soft cheese. You might like to serve it drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil.*

1 large tub natural yoghurt

1. Sit a strainer over the top of a deep bowl. Line the strainer with a couple of layers of cheesecloth.
2. Pour the yoghurt into the centre of the cheesecloth. Gather up the sides of the cheesecloth and fold them over the top (so the yoghurt is covered), then place the bowl and strainer in the fridge overnight.
3. The next morning, the labneh will sit in the cheesecloth and the whey will be caught in the bowl. Transfer the labneh to a clean container and store, covered, in the fridge. It will keep for several weeks (depending on the expiry of the yoghurt).

## Spelt and Sesame Crackers

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup wholemeal spelt flour

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup white spelt flour

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup sesame seeds

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt (optional)

1 teaspoon tamari

1.5 Tablespoons cold-pressed oil

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup cold water

1. Preheat the oven to 180 °C.
2. Mix the flours, sesame seeds and salt in a bowl.
3. Add the tamari & oil, then the water, to make a dough mixture.
4. Dust the dough lightly with flour and roll it out with a rolling pin until very thin.
5. Cut into squares or any other shape, and then place on a baking tray lined with baking paper.
6. Bake for 10-15 minutes or until just turning golden.

*Based on a recipe from The Food Coach website:*

*<http://www.thefoodcoach.com.au/recipes/?RecipeID=582>.*

## Garden Vegetable Pasta Sauce

*Makes about 8 cups of sauce*

600 g pumpkin

400 g sweet potato

1 carrot

1 capsicum

1 zucchini

1–2 celery sticks

1 onion

1–2 cloves of garlic

Italian herbs

1 cup of good-quality veggie stock

1 tin (400 g) chopped tomatoes

Bay leaf

Handful of chopped fresh herbs/greens from the garden: parsley, kale, spinach – or whatever you have growing – chopped finely.

1. Sauté the onion, garlic and Italian herbs in olive oil.
2. Stir in all the chopped veggies, except the fresh herbs/greens.
3. Add the stock, then cover and simmer for 20 minutes over low heat, until the vegetables are soft (checking and stirring regularly).
4. Add the tomatoes and bay leaf, then cover again and simmer for about another 20 minutes.
5. Add the herbs/greens. Cook, covered, for 5 minutes.
6. Remove the bay leaf, then process the pasta sauce with a stick blender until smooth. Season with salt and pepper if needed.

The children love this sauce served over spelt pagodas with shredded cheese.

## Pumpkin Soup

Serves 4–6

1–2 leeks

1 knob of ginger, finely chopped

1 clove of garlic, minced

Small handful of chopped coriander stem, finely chopped

1.25 kg chopped butternut and jap pumpkin

2–3 sweet potatoes, roughly chopped

1.25 litres of good quality-veggie stock

1 tin of coconut milk

Fresh chopped coriander to serve

1. Heat oil in large saucepan.
2. Sauté leeks for five minutes, or until soft.
3. Add ginger, garlic, and coriander stem and sauté for another five minutes.
4. Add chopped pumpkin, sweet potato and veggie stock.
5. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.
6. Add coconut milk and blend with a stick blender until smooth.

*Adapted from 'Wholefood' by Jude Blereau*

# READING

## The Essentials of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education

*Adapted by Ellon Gold for Periwinkle Preschool from an article by Susan Howard. Susan's article was published in Gateways, the newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, 2006, and is an abridged version of a chapter in Mentoring in Waldorf Early Childhood Education, published by WECAN.*

Rudolf Steiner spoke about the experiences that are essential for the healthy development of the young child. These include:

- love and warmth
- an environment that nourishes the senses
- creative and artistic experiences
- meaningful adult activity to be imitated
- self-initiated free, imaginative play
- protection of the forces of childhood
- gratitude, reverence, and wonder
- joy, humour, and happiness
- early childhood educators on a path of inner development.

### Love and Warmth

“Children who live in an atmosphere of love and warmth, and who have around them truly good examples to imitate, are living in their proper element.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

Love and emotional warmth create the basis for the child's healthy development. These qualities should live between the adult caregiver and the child, in the children's behavior toward one another, and among the adults in the early childhood center. Children are also served if this love and warmth exist in the relationships between the educators and the parents, between the early childhood educators and in the surrounding community.

## An Environment that Nourishes the Senses

“The essential task of the early childhood educator is to create the proper physical environment around the children. ‘Physical environment’ must be understood in the widest sense imaginable. It includes not just what happens around the children in the material sense, but everything that occurs in their environment, everything that can be perceived by their senses, that can work on the inner powers of the children from the surrounding physical space.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

Early learning is profoundly connected to the child’s own physical body and sensory experience. Everything the young child sees, hears, and touches has an effect. Thus, a clean, orderly, beautiful, quiet setting is essential. The physical environment, both indoors and outdoors, should provide varied and nourishing opportunities for self-education—experiences in touch, balance, lively and joyful movement, and also inward listening. The children should experience large-group, small-group, and solitary activities.

The educators, in integrating diverse elements into a harmonious and meaningful environment, provide surroundings that are accessible to the child’s understanding, feeling, and active will. The care, love, and intention expressed through the outer materials and furnishings of the environment are experienced unconsciously by the child. The child experiences the immediate environment as ensouled and nurturing. The adult shapes the temporal environment as well as the spatial. Through a rhythmic schedule, in which the same thing happens at the same time on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, the child gains a sense of security and confidence in the world. Also, the different activities of the day should take place in a comfortable flow with smooth transitions.

## Creative and Artistic Experience

“In order to become true educators, we must be able to see the truly aesthetic element in the work, to bring an artistic quality into our tasks. ... If we bring this aesthetic element, then we begin to come closer to what the child wills out of their own nature.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*

In the early childhood class, the art of education is the art of living. The teacher is an artist in how she perceives and relates to the children and to the activities of daily life. She orchestrates and choreographs the rhythms of each day, each week, and each season in such a way that the children can breathe freely in a living structure. In addition, the teacher offers the children opportunities for artistic experiences: in singing and music; in movement and gesture, through eurythmy and rhythmic games; and in creative speech and language, through verses, poetry, and stories. The children model with beeswax, draw, and do watercolour painting. Puppet and marionette shows put on by the teacher are an important element in the life of the kindergarten.

## Meaningful Adult Activity to be Imitated

“The task of the early childhood educator is to adapt the practical activities of daily life so that they are suitable for the child’s imitation through play. ... The activities of children in early childhood must be derived directly from life itself rather than being “thought out” by the intellectualized culture of adults. ... The most important thing is to give children the opportunity to directly imitate life itself.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

”Children do not learn through instruction or admonition but through imitation. Good sight will develop if the environment has the proper conditions of light and color, while in the brain and blood circulation, the physical foundations will be laid for a healthy sense of morality if children witness moral actions in their surroundings.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

Real, meaningful work with a purpose, adjusted to the needs of the child, is in accordance with the child’s natural and inborn need for movement, and is an enormously significant educational activity. The teacher focuses on the meaningful activities that nurture life in the preschool “home”, such as cooking and baking, gardening, doing laundry and cleaning, creating and caring for the materials in the immediate environment, and taking care of the bodily needs of the children. This directed attention of the teacher creates an atmosphere of freedom in which the individuality of each child can be active. It is not intended just that the children copy the outer movements and actions of the adult, but that they experience also the inner attitude—the devotion, care, sense of purpose, focus, and creative spirit of the adult.

## Self-Initiated Free, Imaginative Play

“In the child’s play activity, we can only provide the conditions for education. What is gained through play, through everything that cannot be determined by fixed rules, stems fundamentally from the self-activity of the child, the real educational value of play lives in the fact that we ignore our rules and regulations, our educational theory, and allow the child free rein.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *Self Education in the Light of Anthroposophy*

In a seemingly contradictory indication, Rudolf Steiner also said:

“Giving direction and guidance to play is one of the essential tasks of sensible education, which is to say an art of education that is right for humanity. ... The early childhood educator must school [their] observation in order to develop an artistic eye, to detect the individual quality of each child’s play.”

— Rudolf Steiner, Lecture of February 24, 1921 in Utrecht,  
The Netherlands

Little children learn through play. They approach play in an entirely individual way, out of their entirely individual ways, out of their unique configuration of soul and spirit, and out of their unique experiences of the world in which they live. The manner in which a child plays may offer a picture of how they will take up their destiny as an adult. The task of the teacher is to create an environment that supports the possibility of healthy play. This environment includes the physical

surroundings, furnishings, and play materials; the social environment of activities and social interactions; and the inner/spiritual environment of thoughts, intentions, and imaginations held by the adults.

## **Protection of the Forces of Childhood**

“Although it is highly necessary that each person should be fully awake in later life, the child must be allowed to remain as long as possible in the peaceful, dreamlike condition of pictorial imagination in which their early years of life are passed. For if we allow their organism to grow strong in this non-intellectual way, they will rightly develop in later life the intellectuality needed in the world today.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*

The lively, waking dream of the little child’s consciousness must be allowed to thrive in the early childhood group. This means that the educators refrains as much as possible from verbal instruction. Instead, her gestures and actions provide a model for the child’s imitation. Familiar daily rhythms and activities provide a context where the need for verbal instruction is reduced. Simple, archetypal imagery in stories, songs, and games provides experiences that the children can internalise but that do not require intellectual or critical reflection or explanation.

## **Gratitude, Reverence, and Wonder**

“An atmosphere of gratitude should grow naturally in children through merely witnessing the gratitude the adults feel as they receive what is freely given by others, and in how they express this gratitude. If a child says ‘thank you’ very naturally – not in response to the urging of others, but simply through imitating – something has been done that will greatly benefit the child’s whole life. Out of this an all-embracing gratitude will develop toward the whole world. This cultivation of gratitude is of paramount importance.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

“Out of these early, all-pervading experiences of gratitude, the first tender capacity for love, which is deeply embedded in each and every child, begins to sprout in earthly life. If, during the first period of life, we create an atmosphere of gratitude around the children, then out of this gratitude toward the world, toward the entire universe, and also out of thankfulness for being able to be in this world, a profound and warm sense of devotion will arise . . . upright, honest, and true.”

—Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

This is the basis for what will become a capacity for deep, intimate love and commitment in later life, for dedication and loyalty, for true admiration of others, for fervent spiritual or religious devotion, and for placing oneself wholeheartedly in the service of the world.

## **Joy, Humour, and Happiness**

“The joy of children in and with their environment must therefore be counted among the forces that build and shape the physical organs. They need educators who look and act with happiness and, most of all, with honest, unaffected love. Such a love



that streams, as it were, with warmth through the physical environment of the children may be said to literally ‘hatch out’ the forms of the physical organs.”  
— Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

“If you make a surly face so that a child gets the impression you are a grumpy person, this harms the child for the rest of their life. What kind of school plan you make is neither here nor there; what matters is what sort of person you are.”  
— Rudolf Steiner, *The Kingdom of Childhood*

The teacher’s earnestness about their work and their serious striving must be balanced with humour and a demeanour that bespeaks happiness. There must be moments of humour and delight in the preschool every day.

## Early Childhood Educators on a Path of Inner Development

“For the small child before the change of teeth, the most important thing in education is the teacher’s own being.”  
— Rudolf Steiner, *Essentials of Education*

“Just think what feelings arise in the soul of the early childhood educator who realizes: What I accomplish with this child, I accomplish for the grown-up person in their twenties. What matters is not so much a knowledge of abstract educational principles or pedagogical rules. ... [W]hat does matter is that a deep sense of responsibility develops in [the educator’s heart and mind] and that this affects her or his worldview and the way she or he stands in life.”

— Rudolf Steiner, ‘Education in the Face of the Present-Day World Situation’,  
Lecture of June 10, 1920

Here we come to the spiritual environment of the early childhood setting: the thoughts, attitudes, and imaginations living in the adult who cares for the children. This invisible realm that lies behind the outer actions of the teacher has a profound influence on the child’s development. The spiritual environment includes recognition of the child as a threefold being—of body, soul, and spirit—on a path of evolutionary development. This recognition provides a foundation for the daily activities in the kindergarten, and for the relationship between adult and child. Such an understanding of the nature and destiny of the human comes out of the inner life of the adult, the life of the individual Ego. This is a realm that is largely hidden, and hence is difficult to observe directly and to evaluate objectively. Yet ultimately this realm may affect the development of the children most profoundly. It is not merely our outer activity that influences the growing child. What lies behind and is expressed through this outer activity also is crucial. Ultimately, the most profound influence on the child is who we are as human beings—and who we are becoming and how.

Rudolf Steiner’s advice to the first early childhood educator Elizabeth Grunelius, in the early 1920s, can be paraphrased as follows:

- Observe the children.
- Actively meditate.
- Follow your intuitions.

- Work so that all your actions are worthy of imitation.

Today, those of us who work with young children are challenged to engage in a constant process of renewal. We must actively observe the children in our care, carry them in our meditations, and seek to work consciously and artistically to create the experiences that will serve their development. Our devotion to this task awakens us to the importance of self-education and transformation in the context of community. Our ongoing study of child and human development, our own artistic and meditative practices, and our work with Anthroposophy, independently and together with others, become essential elements for the practice of early childhood education.

Here we can come to experience that we are not alone on this journey. We are supported through our encounters with one another other and with our sharing of insights, experience and knowledge. We are helped also by those spiritual beings who are committed to our continued development and to the renewal of culture that Steiner Education seeks to serve.

The Essentials of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education provides a deeper understanding of the philosophy of Periwinkle Preschool and provides the platform from which we embrace and link our daily practices to the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.

# Toys

*Extracts from articles by Carla de Jong. Carla's website has many examples of the types of positives toys she refers to: [www.dejong.id.au/carladejong-toys](http://www.dejong.id.au/carladejong-toys).*

Before we can have a closer look at toys, as such, we should really ask ourselves first: “What is playing?”

A child plays through imitation; they replay scenes from daily life; they absorb everything around them. So we should realise that, in the presence of children, we should behave in a manner worthy of imitation. This means not only on the outside, it has to be real – a child senses immediately when we just pretend and we do not really support our actions.

Learning for a child is a reverse action. We (mostly) think before we do, but a child does first and might think about it later. Therefore, we do not give children lengthy explanations, but show them, do it. Explaining is purely theoretical: a child cannot understand this unless you awaken their abstract thinking forces. If we explain everything to a child (and this is very often the case in our society – people feel they owe an explanation to everything), then we make the child more conscious, which is hardening their thinking processes and works against their life forces.

When the intellect is appealed to too early, children are hindered in the development of their social abilities. Heidi Britz Crecelius says in ‘Children at Play’: “It will not be the intellectual abilities but the social faculties of human beings that will on the whole make it possible to live on this earth in the future; one should keep this in mind where young people are growing up. Computers can do calculations of every kind for us, but social imagination, moral imagination – these our technical slaves will never develop – these we ourselves have to develop.”

During the first 6 to 7 years a child is totally open to all experiences in their surroundings. All impressions are absorbed deeply. The formation of the organs is inwardly completed under the imprinting influence of outer experiences. Therefore, we want to surround the child with colours, sounds and toys, and in an environment that helps them develop in a healthy and balanced way. A child needs a human environment to find their way into human society and to be able to grow into it through play and imitation.

Now, after exploring the play of children, we can ask the question: What sort of toys will help the child in their development?

Great toys for children are the “ready-made toys” we find in nature: seeds, sticks, stones, mud, soil water etc. It would take us too far to go in depth into this, suffice to say that it is good for children who are as such already so close to nature to play with nature’s products.

Also, playing with the four elements is something children have always done, and always will do: flying a kite on a windy day, blowing feathers, chasing falling autumn leaves. With the fire we can roast potatoes, marshmallows, we can build a campfire. Games with and in the water, playing with the hose in the garden on a hot day or with the water in the bath. Then the earth: playing with mud, digging in the soil, building sandcastles etc. It is important for children to have toys with ample scope for imagination, beautiful but simple, so the child can fill in whatever their imagination creates.

Toys we make or buy for children should ideally be made out of natural materials. As the physical experiences of the child are built into their personality later on, the child’s feeling in later life is developed through their physical feeling when they are young. When the child touches natural material, they experience a reality – synthetic material is dead matter scientifically put together. A child is constantly touching everything, they are feeling their way into the world: with natural materials we let children feel quality and reality, there is real interaction, while plastic and other synthetic toys put a barrier between the child and the toy – there is no living interaction.

It is also important that toys should be well made. Toys that are not made to last are not worth caring for, not worth looking after. When we give the child good toys, they can show care and respect, which later in life will enable them to show care and respect in their relationships.

### The Doll: One of the most important toys

When selecting toys, the most important consideration is that they should stimulate the child’s imagination and provide images of a living, natural kind (hence sections of branches rather than mathematically structured building blocks). These considerations apply especially to dolls.

A doll is an image of a human being and is therefore the toy most suited to develop and enliven the self image of the growing child. This has two consequences. Firstly, it would be a mistake to prevent small boys from playing with dolls and to restrict such play to girls under the erroneous impression that it is a “motherly activity”. Such discrimination between the sexes is pedagogically meaningless and ignores what is actually important for his age. Secondly, from this point of view, it would be the worst possible thing to give the child a doll complete in all anatomical details, technically so perfect that it can open and close its eyes, can be fed, can wet its diapers and so forth.

The child would then have little use for the power of imagination. This power needs to be used, however, and often atrophies only because it finds insufficient opportunity to be used and strengthened. Just as human muscles are strengthened by regular use, so does the child's imagination need to be used in order to grow. In view of the manufacturer's effort to produce even more detailed dolls, it is not surprising that children appear to become increasingly demanding. The novelty soon wears off, however, the tricks needed to activate the technical arrangements, such a "speaking" soon become boring. The permanent frozen smile on the mask-like features, the grotesque position of the fingers of the average so-called beautiful doll, need hardly be mentioned.

The simple knotted doll cannot be bettered, for children bring to it the inexhaustible profusion of their own imaginings. Indeed, it is only through fantasy that the knotted doll becomes a doll at all, and thus a living image of the human being. Such a simple doll enables the child through the power of imagination to embody every possible view of the human being in a perpetually changing, mobile, living way.

Today there are many children whose imagination is so stunted that they do not know what to do with a simple knot doll and must rely on an adult's suggestions. It is often surprising how rapidly this loss of a child's natural gift can be made good if the necessary means are given to the child. However, after the age of five this is only possible to a limited degree. If the parents can find a relationship to the knotted doll, then the child can imitate this. If this is not possible, and there are many understandable reasons for this, it would be preferable for the parent to make a plain stuffed rag doll with simple little clothes rather than to buy a manufactured doll from the toy store.

*Carla acknowledges the following sources for her articles:*

- ◆ *Heidi Britz-Crecelius: Children at Play, Preparation for Life.*
- ◆ *A.C. Harwood: The Way of a Child*
- ◆ *Caroline von Heydebrand: Childhood, A Study of the Growing Soul*
- ◆ *Freya Jaffke: Toymaking with Children*
- ◆ *Karl Konig: The First Three Years of the Child*
- ◆ *Marion Millet: Working Wooden Toys*
- ◆ *Karin Neuschutz: The Doll Book*
- ◆ *Joan Salter: The Incarnating Child*
- ◆ *Rudolf Steiner: The Kingdom of Childhood*
- ◆ *And the lectures of Susan Harris on the Young Child.*

# What About TV?

*Extract from an article by Kim Preston*

Children learn about the world through imitating and doing. During this highly active time they are preparing foundations upon which all later logical thought processes, noble attitudes, good moral behaviours and healthy bodies can be built.

To read just one page from any of the growing numbers of books about television, available from libraries and bookshops, quickly confirms the instinctive knowledge most parents feel: that TV viewing is an addictive habit and possibly detrimental to the child's well-being.

To begin with, TV interferes with the child's wish to play and robs them of the concentration to do so. Play is the realm of the young child, and their ability to become absorbed in creative free-play is directly linked to their later abilities in social, emotional and intellectual areas.

Albert Einstein said that imagination is more important than knowledge. But TV, by feeding the viewer continuous fast moving and often stereotyped images, inhibits imagination. Indeed, there is no desire to be active or play creatively, and against their will, they are left with their heads full of vivid images that remain with them into their nightly dreams.

Some children emerge from viewing with distressing, yet well documented behaviours such as hyperactivity, aggression and nervousness.

Often parents exclaim, "If only there were decent programs for my toddler/child!" Yet what the young child needs is a human environment to help them find their way in our human environment. To learn about being human, the child must see, feel, hear, smell, talk with and 'sense' other people.

Even animal documentaries are unsuitable, because they can only amuse and pass on a few dry intellectual facts. A young child can only come to understand this glorious world and know about tiny insects, 100-year-old trees and such by actually experiencing them through their whole self. The TV cannot duplicate nor replace the experience of total joy felt by a child as they glimpse a wild rabbit scurry across a bush track, or the humorous task of bathing a dog, or the wonder of the laughing kookaburra. Older children and adults can gain an intellectual appreciation of such scenes on the screen, but the young child is entirely sense organ and their whole development depends on the way in which their senses nourish their body, mind and soul.

A trial of 3 to 4 weeks of 100% no TV will certainly convince the adults that the extra effort to help children come through the initial withdrawal period is worthwhile.

Children will suddenly be interested in what's going on in the family and be free to play as only children know how to! The TV can be left unplugged with a safety socket in the wall, a cloth draped over the set and news or sports programs can be recorded for later viewing when the children are in bed. Weekend mornings may have to be more adult centred to begin with as children will really feel at a loss when there are no cartoons to watch. Family walks, household tasks, car washing, bread making or reading aloud in the parents' bed are some proven replacement activities.

Children are born into this world with an innate trust that we will love and nourish them.

To be worthy of a child's trust and dependence requires awareness and effort. We must find out all we can about what our children are absorbing, whether it be sugar, food additives, pesticides, U.V. or T.V. If there is cause for concern, it is our responsibility to act.

It's OK to say "No" to TV, just as we say "No" to outdoor play without sunhats in summer. It's not being extreme, but being aware, conscious and active in giving your child the best help for a healthy and happy future.

*Sources:*

*Jerry Mander: Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television. William Morrow, 1978*

*Martin Large: Who's Bringing Them Up? Hawthorne Press, 1990*

*Neil Postman: The Disappearance of Childhood. Dell, 1982*

*Marie Winn: The Plug-in Drug. Penguin, 1986*

# Thinking About Clothes

*Extract from an article by Margaret Meyerkort*

The human being is born without physical protection, so they begin their earthly path in a most vulnerable condition, depending on the caring concern of others. In nature, we see everywhere that enveloping sheaths are needed so that life can unfold: the seed of the plant requires the warm soil and the bird's egg needs the shell. So, the human being too has to be protected from wind and weather and from the pollution of an industrialised world.

For some time and for varying reasons it has been fashionable to expose young children to a lot of light and air and it has been a policy generally to toughen them up at a very early stage in life. Such a practice forgets that the human being has to build up their own warmth organism largely independent of nature. Directly the child raises itself into the upright posture, lifts itself above the realm of the mineral, plant and animal, and follows their own individual path which is no longer that of the species.

In fact, the human being is, above all, a creature of warmth. Their warmth organism is most finely differentiated in that it continuously balances heat and cold. Thus, they maintain definite temperature in spite of the variations of temperature in their surroundings.

In the human being, we find neither excessive cold nor heat – the former with its contracting, the latter with its dissolving tendency – but a middle region of temperature. The human being needs this balance to be active.

The faculty of balancing the opposing forces of heat and cold is acquired gradually during the first years of the child's life. Moreover, the balancing of these two forces is an ongoing process which has to do with the fact that the human being's body, soul and spirit remain in a continually varying relationship to one another throughout life. When we are not quite "here" we feel cold, at some other moments, burning hot. We have to re-establish our specifically human warmth at each stage in our life if we are to be a happy and healthy person.

So, it is important for parents and educators to establish and refine the warmth organism of the growing child. Mostly it is a question of protection. Young children wearing trousers are unable to keep them up because the waist has not yet formed. It begins to develop around the seventh year.

The liver and kidney regions, which need warmth most, will have lost warmth before the children pull up their trousers, that is, if they can do it by themselves. Braces or straps on the trousers are preferable to a firm elastic around the waist which impedes the circulation. The tummy will then be kept warm and the child will be more comfortable in their play.



Nowadays, more and more people are recognising the difference between synthetic and organic fibres. The skin is a tender organ, the outer boundary of the body; it excretes and breathes. So it continuously creates and recreates a relationship between the body and its surroundings. Inorganic fibres in clothing can curtail the functions of the skin and even a healthy skin may get irritated.

The colour of the child's clothing plays a part when we consider their age and the need to harmonise their temperament and their character traits. Clothing that is chosen because it is fashionable can be impersonal and therefore educationally unhelpful. People's characters and instincts find expression in their outer activities and behaviour, including their choice of colour. There lies a challenge for parents and educators to try and understand the growing personality of their child.

In accordance with the stages of their incarnation, the young sensitive child is more related to the seven colours of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, light blue, dark blue, violet). Just as at the beginning of the day pink is the colour of the sky, so the human soul feels pink at the dawn of life.

I have found that a print on a child's clothing matters too. In fact, when they wear a plain coloured short or dress, they tend to be more harmonious within themselves and more concentrated: the eye drinks in, as it were, the one colour and does not have to hop about from one small impression to another.

A growing child's clothes need to be rather on the loose side. The skin, as a breathing organism, can fulfil its functions better, the movements of the limbs will be freer, more agile and so the child can enjoy their activities more, an important point for any parent.

Lastly, 'we do not go into battle unarmed', which means that our clothing should suit the occasion. All these considerations don't make it easier to choose clothes, but it can be immensely satisfying and rewarding to have arrived at a really suitable choice.