

Motueka Rudolph Steiner School

Question 1

How will your teaching and learning programme support priority learners (please provide evidence)?

We assume the term "priority learners" refers to Māori and Pasifika students, students with special education needs and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. In Steiner education the emphasis is on whole class mixed ability learning (as a reflection of the wider community). A broad, and holistic, approach to education is used which creates more opportunities to engage those students with challenges or higher needs. In other words, much of the extra support we provide to "priority learners" is built-in to our teaching, curriculum, and learning environments. Our learning environment is explained in more detail below.

The teacher

- Class teachers work in similar roles to te tuakana in a whanau classes – in that they journey with the same class up the school, providing a focus for the class and continuity over many years. This longer relationship between teacher and student allows for a deeper understanding of problems or difficulties, and a longer timeframe for support and extra assistance.
- The teacher teaches 'out of herself' – i.e. she imparts a strong and living connection to the subject being taught, and seeks to engage the *feelings* of the children so that a strong personal identification with the subject matter can occur.
- Each day the teacher memorises and tells a continuing story, legend, fable, myth, historic or epic tale that is part of the age-appropriate Story Curriculum, a defining aspect of Steiner education. All children enjoy this part of the day which assists with student engagement.
- Imaginative, oral and practical presentations of learning material prepared by the teacher, engenders interest and enhances the teacher's authority in the eyes of the children. No textbooks are used.
- Imagination is a key quality brought by the teacher to the class. Pictorial images are a vital factor in making learning a personal experience.
- Art and Music play an important weekly role in engaging children's feelings for the content of their learning.
- Between ages 7 – 9, rhythmical memory is at its strongest, so the teacher draws on the children's natural interest in the world and structures the lesson rhythmically.
- The teacher's task is to foster social awareness and cohesion within the class group – the long term continuity offered by the teacher enhances this.
- Each lesson and learning process is a balance of primary experience, social interaction (discussing, listening, working together) and working alone.
- The children learn from and with each other – in this whanau environment they learn to appreciate each other's gifts and to develop an understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- The obvious commitment, care for the children, and close relationship with parents, makes the teacher a figure of moral authority, in the eyes of the children.

The curriculum within the daily rhythm

- A horizontal curriculum, (where various subjects are taught to the children of one class age) allows for the integration of subjects in meeting the developmental needs of children, in an interdisciplinary way.

- A vertical curriculum (where each individual subject is shown to develop from class year to class year, from youngest to oldest student group), shows the spiral nature of the path of learning. Here, new skills are built on existing skills and topics can be revised from new and different age-appropriate stages.
- A diagonal curriculum is also at work where there are cross links with different skills and abilities at different ages. e.g. the skill of knitting, learnt in class one, neurologically supports flexibility of maths thinking in Class 3.
- The school day has a breathing-in, breathing-out quality to it, provided by sessions of intense concentrated work/inhaling; followed by active, expressive movement, song, laughter, or rhythmic out-breathing.

The environment

- The classroom environment is consciously structured in a meaningful way, ensuring that the sense impressions the children are exposed to are appropriate to their developmental needs. A sense of beauty and calm is created by seasonal tables, handcrafted wooden desks, and children's recent artwork on display and blackboard drawings illustrating some aspect of the Main Lesson.
- All materials used (for example, crayons, pencils, fountain pens) are of good natural quality and supplied by the school.
- Children's experiences are real, not virtual.
- The language they experience is natural, not electronic, and the teacher's speech, especially during storytelling, is clearly articulated.
- Learning activities involve the children in practical ways that are related to everyday life and the changing seasons. Such activities within the daily and weekly rhythm provide all children with a sense of continuity and orientation.

The Community; links between home and school

- Class teachers make a friendly 'home visit' to the families of each incoming child, seeing them as individuals within their home setting, and being seen as connected to their home.
- Class parent meetings are warm and welcoming, with open communication fostered and valued. Parent/teacher interviews are meaningful with enough time given to discuss in depth the child's progress.
- Seasonal festivals engage the whole community in celebrations that are highly creative (Easter baskets, Lanterns at Mid-winter/Matariki, annual Spring Fair) and nourishing.
- Community meetings provide a forum for discussion of issues, visioning, and future planning.

Te reo is part of the curriculum for all students. Our Te reo teacher is [REDACTED], a Resource Teacher of Māori. We have access to a local Extra Lesson teacher for students needing extra help. [REDACTED] is a former teacher at our school and a qualified Extra Lesson teacher. Follow this link for information on [Extra Lesson](#).

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We currently offer an education pathway from birth to age 12 (year 8). Our offering of playgroups, kindergartens and primary school support all our families during these important years. This gives us the ability to start relationships with families when their children are babies. We can then identify special needs early. There is a close collegial relationship between our playgroup coordinators, kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers. This longer time-line and information sharing greatly assists us in supporting children with special needs or disadvantages.

The best evidence that all our systems are achieving our educational goals comes from the performance of our graduates at Motueka High School. Almost all graduates are in the top streams for their year. They

feature prominently in sporting and academic awards. [See this article](#). Because our school opened in 2002 our oldest graduates are now only in years 11 and 12, so we do not have a body of NCEA results. We would leave the last word on this topic to the High School principal, [REDACTED]

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Question 2

Please confirm what you believe to be the value you are going to add to the existing school network

The growth of our school over the last 11 years indicates we are adding value to the local school network. Conversion to a PSKH influences our contribution to the existing school network in two distinct ways.

Firstly, it ensures we can continue doing what we do. We do face financial challenges and the need to find a new campus. PSKH funding will greatly help overcome these challenges. If our school was to close or retrench, the local school network would lose diversity, choice and a top performing school. We are already a well accepted part of the local school network so our conversion to a PSKH should not be controversial or detrimental to other schools.

Secondly, by converting to a PSKH we will be able bring additional value to the existing school network. Our desire is to relocate to a new campus that will be larger, modern, well resourced, farm based, alternative, innovative and more connected to the global Steiner education network. This will add extra capacity and choice to the local school network. It will also add a distinct alternative to state schooling, without a cost barrier to families. We broaden what many people think of as a school. Greater community involvement and use of facilities would be an example. Parents will be encouraged to undertake projects on the school grounds. We imagine having resident and visiting specialists such as a gardener or artist or scientist. Many of these people will come to us from overseas where they do this type of thing in the wider Steiner school network. We already have regular visits from a German musician, a Bothmer gymnast, and a non violence trainer. Some of these visitors offer concerts and workshops to the public.

As a PSKH we will have the freedom and resources to innovate, especially in the interests of the "priority groups." Examples of this would be the expansion of farming and gardening activities, which are especially useful for students who are struggling to engage in core subjects. We also wish to increase our use of local experts to teach speciality subjects and increase our learning outside the classroom.

As a PSKH an increasing number of children will be able to experience Steiner education from preschool to class 8, and an increasing number of families will benefit from the community support we offer.