



Education

Dunedin Rudolf Steiner

Learning with head, heart and hands

Proprietors Handbook

RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL TRUST OTAGO

**Please also read the Handbook for a Proprietor of a State Integrated School
(produced by the Association of Integrated Schools)**

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Introduction to the Rudolf Steiner School Trust Otago (known as the Proprietors Trust)

The Trust is a charitable entity with the overarching aim of promoting Steiner Education in Otago.

Its roles include safeguarding the special character of the school and kindergarten, owning the land and buildings at Maia, and being the governing body of the kindergarten¹.

The Trust is party to an Integration Agreement with the Ministry of Education. This integration agreement relates solely to the school and states that the Trust owns the land and buildings on which the integrated school runs, offering education to children from the age of 5 to 13 years old. The Trust is responsible for ensuring that the school offers appropriate classroom space of a standard equivalent to that provided in state schools. It also states that the Trust is responsible for the special character of the school and shares this responsibility with the College of Teachers at the school. The Integration Agreement states:

“The School is a Rudolf Steiner Waldorf School in which Rudolf Steiner’s Art of Education is practised. Anthroposophy as a world conception, its description of the universe, and the human being is the basis of the art of education and of all endeavour in the School. The education with a special character includes festival observances and is Christian in its deepest sense, free of dogma or sectarianism”.

The Proprietors Trust is also the governing body of the Kindergarten and employs the Kindergarten teachers.

Documents relevant to the trust

- The Proprietors Trust Deed – ie the constitution of the Trust, its aims and objectives and rules of operation
- The Integration Agreement for the school
- The Steiner Federation Curriculum Guidelines
- The Steiner ECE Essentials document

¹ The Board of Trustees is the governing body of the school

How the Proprietors Trust works

The Proprietors Trust must have a minimum of 5 members and a maximum of 12. The Trust Deed states that no person shall be a member of the trust unless they are an original member, a teacher employed by the Trust in the conducting of a school, or any other person nominated by the Trust Board.

The Proprietors Trust normally meets once a month. Members tend to take on portfolios within the trust – for example one or two members may have a special responsibility to kindergarten or to buildings.

How are new members appointed?

Trustees can also be nominated onto the Proprietors Trust during the year, by the existing Trustees. The process is as follows

1. A prospective member (the “candidate”) may express interest to a member of the Proprietors Trust, or the Proprietors Trust may approach a suitable potential member
2. Information is provided to the candidate – the Trust Deed, the Integration Agreement and this handbook
3. An existing Trustee contacts the candidate to clarify any matters, to check if there are reasons why the candidate may not be appropriate (eg conflicts of interest, issues around public profile)
4. The candidate is asked to write a letter to the Proprietors Trust which outlines the skills and attributes they offer
5. The candidate is invited to attend a Proprietors Trust meeting so that they have an understanding of how the meetings are conducted, and an opportunity to meet the other members
6. The Trust meet to discuss the application and decide whether or not to nominate and vote the candidate onto the Trust.
7. New Trustees sign a document to confirm that they have read the Trust Deed, the Integration Agreement and that there are no reasons of public profile, conflict of interest or Charities Act criteria that would disqualify them from the role.

If the nomination happens outside the Annual General Meeting then the new Trustee will only hold the position until the next AGM at which point they may or may not be renominated.

The Annual General Meeting

At the Annual General meeting of the Proprietors Trust new trustees may be appointed or confirmed in place. The business at the AGM is to

- Consider the annual accounts
- Elect Trustees in the place of those retiring
- Appoint an auditor
- Elect a secretary and treasurer from the Trustees

At the Annual General Meeting one fifth of the Trustees (the longest serving to that date) will retire. Those members can offer themselves for re-election at the same meeting. The Trustees are then also listed on the Charity Commission register.

What the Trust looks for in its Trustees

The Trustees must uphold the aims and objectives of the Trust. The skills and experience that all the Trustees bring would include the following matters, the first item being held to be integral to the Trust. The Trust also recognises that each individual will be on a different stage of their understanding of our special character.

- An understanding and a commitment to the special character of the school and of Steiner pedagogy
- Property management or building expertise
- Financial competence
- Aptitude for governance matters

As the Trust is party to the Integration Agreement for a crown entity,(ie the state integrated school) its members are also bound to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Trustees are responsible for acting in a way that safeguards the Trust and ensures that it complies with its aims and objectives and follows its constitutional rules. Members are therefore expected to attend meetings regularly, which normally happen once a month. Consideration for membership of the Trust may also include factors such as whether a prospective member has any conflict of interest in the role, or holds a public profile that might unduly influence the public's perception of the work of the Trust. Trustees are officers of the charity under the Charities Act, and some individuals may be disqualified from this role– disqualifications include, but are not limited to being:-

- an undischarged bankrupt
- under the age of 16 years
- convicted of a crime involving dishonesty (section 2(1) of the Crimes Act 1961) and sentenced within the last 7 years

- prohibited from being a director or promoter of, or being concerned or taking part in the management of, an incorporated or unincorporated body under the Companies Act 1993, the Securities Act 1978, the Securities Markets Act 1988, or the Takeovers Act 1993
- disqualified by the Charities Commission under section 31(4) of the Charities Act 2005

The Trust will cover any necessary Trustee childcare or additional travel costs for meeting attendance.

Roles and responsibilities of Trustees

1. Set strategic directions and long-term plans and monitor progress against them
2. Protect the special character of the school
3. Monitor financial management of the Trust and kindergarten and approve the budget
4. Ensure the Trust is compliant with its legal requirements
6. Attend Trust meetings and take an active role as a trustee
7. Review major policies
8. Fulfil the intent of te Tiriti o Waitangi by valuing and reflecting Aotearoa/ New Zealand's dual cultural heritage
9. Review and monitor Personnel policy and procedure. Act as good employers
10. Deal with disputes and conflicts referred to the Trust
11. Represent the school in a positive, appropriate manner
12. Oversee, conserve and enhance the property

The Trust is committed to ethical conduct in all areas of its responsibilities and authority. Trustees shall:

- Maintain and understand the values, goals and special character of the School
- Be loyal to the School and its mission
- Publicly represent the School in a positive manner

- Respect the integrity of all employees
- Observe the confidentiality of non-public information acquired in their roles as trustees
- Be diligent and attend Trust meetings prepared for full and appropriate participation in decision making
- Ensure that individual trustees do not act independently of the Trust's decisions
- Recognise that only the Chairperson can speak for the Trust unless authorised by the other Trustees
- Speak with one voice through its adopted policies and ensure that any disagreements with the Trust's stance are resolved within the Trust
- Unless otherwise delegated by the Trust, recognise that an individual on the Trust or a subgroup of the Trust carries no authority in their interactions with the Principal or staff unless authorised by the other Trustees
- Be available to undertake appropriate training
- Avoid any conflicts of interest with respect to their fiduciary* responsibility

* “A fiduciary is an individual or organization legally responsible for holding or investing assets on behalf of someone else, usually called the beneficiary. The assets must be managed in the best interests of the beneficiary and never for personal gain to the fiduciary” (from www.equanto.com/glossary/f.html cited 11 May 2005).

In attendance at some meetings

Members of the Management Team

Meeting Procedures

Meetings are held monthly.

These meetings are open to visitors but if matters of a confidential nature (relating to individuals etc) are to be discussed then visitors would be excluded. Minutes are taken of each meeting and papers for the meeting should be provided five days in advance.

Typical agenda

1. Opening Verse
2. Reading for ten minutes: eg B. J. Lievegood: Towards the 21st Century: Lecture Group Life
3. Previous Minutes – amendments, agree, sign off and actions arising
4. Finances – report for last month, any budget plans, annual accounts at year end
5. Kindergarten Report and playgroup
6. Buildings
 - a Maintenance plan
 - b Capital fundraising for new building
7. Board of Trustees - any issues from their meeting
8. Miscellaneous - policy updates, planned events

The Six Exercises linked to Meetings

During the meetings it may be useful for Trust members to consider the following six exercises linked to meetings

1. Control of Thought
 - Follow with particular attention and focus the thoughts of others – as much in isolated thoughts as in the whole discussion
 - Be mindful of expressing your own thoughts intelligibly
 - You talk for other people not for yourself!
2. Initiative in Action
 - Seize the correct moment to speak – without acting on impulse or cutting someone off
 - If you notice you are speaking too much (it is important to notice it), leave space for others to talk
3. Being neutral
 - Control your emotions when you speak – don't react – be master of your feelings
 - If you do not feel any emotions, look for them, participate with your soul.
4. Being Positive
 - Find the positive in every contribution to the discussion
 - If you sometimes look for the negative, do it in order to emphasize the positive
5. Absence of Prejudice
 - Find what is new in each contribution
 - Avoid the thought “I already know that” - be open to that which is new

- Notice that each prejudice closes you to new experiences
6. Balance
- Learn to use each exercise as and when needed

Governance of Kindergarten

The Proprietors Trust is the governing body of the kindergarten and the employer of its staff. The management of the kindergarten is effected through the Kindergarten Head Teacher and the other kindergarten staff. Once a term the kindergarten provides a report to the Trust on the actual state of the kindergarten and on upcoming events and planning in accordance to the strategic and annual plan.

Portfolios

Kindergarten Governance

Keep a focus on the overall direction of the kindergarten, meet termly with all kindergarten staff and ensure the Trust maintains its position as a good employer, and that kindergarten policies and procedures are current and appropriate. Complete the Head teacher appraisal.

Property

Maintain a long term property plan for repairs and building of new facilities. Follow up building matters and ensure that health and safety issues on the property are addressed.

Chairperson

The chairperson is the leader of the Proprietors Trust and carries overall responsibility for the integrity of the Trust's processes. The role involves the following responsibilities: ensuring information flows to the Trust, attending and chairing meetings, establishing and maintaining an ongoing working relationship with the Kindergarten Head teacher, Principal and Executive Officer, dealing with disputes and conflicts referred to the Chair, ensuring the Head Teacher's Performance Agreement and Appraisal are completed on an annual basis, ensuring Annual and Strategic Planning and Reporting is completed.

Treasurer

The Treasurer carries overall responsibility for financial monitoring. The role includes: reporting to the Trust on financial condition, financial planning in line with annual and strategic plans, contributing to development of annual budget. The Proprietors Trust retains overall responsibility for ensuring that financial issues are addressed appropriately.

Proprietors Representative on the School Board

The Proprietors Representative regularly attends the meetings of the School Board to hold the connection between both governing bodies and to take information in either direction. He/she is a full member of the Board as well as the Proprietors Trust and bound to the policies and procedures of the Board. The Trust can have up to 4 representatives on the Board.