**Communications**

Sunrise Waldorf School serves all families in the school, and ongoing communication is promoted by:

* School website, blog, and social media.
* A weekly newsletter, which is sent via email from the office and is the main way the school communicates with parents. It is important that parents read the Newsletter each week. The newsletter includes:

o School updates and announcements

o Registration, enrolment and other important reminders

o Information on upcoming meetings and events

o Articles of interest and what’s happening in the school

Please note that the newsletter does not run ads unless they are directly connected with Sunrise Waldorf School.

* Online surveys and direct emails.
* Open houses and Sunrise community meetings to discuss all-school issues.
* Teacher communications via email, Report Cards, regular Parent Evenings, and Parent and Teacher Interviews.
* Class Parent communications and class newsletters.
* Board meetings, which are held monthly and are open to parents. Upcoming board meetings are posted in the weekly newsletter.
* Parent Association (PA) meetings which are held monthly and are open to all parents. Upcoming PA meetings are posted in the weekly newsletter.
* Parent Enrichment and other events.

 **Parent Evenings**

Parent evenings take place so you can learn more about what is happening in the classroom, both academically and socially. You will learn about the curriculum, Waldorf pedagogy and how it meets the children’s needs and interests at their developmental stage. There will be opportunities to ask about upcoming events and activities for the class.The social health of the class, including positive relationships and communication, is greatly benefitted by parents meeting together with the teacher in a spirit of collaboration and mutual support. As such, it is required that each student is represented at each parent evening.

Your child’s class teacher will hold several class meetings during the year. The dates and times will be announced directly to the class by the teacher or the Class Parent via email. Please attend Parent Evenings to support your child’s learning.

**Parent Teacher Interviews**

Parent Teacher Interviews are held in fall and again in spring. Classes are not in session for these days and the teacher is available by appointment for half-hour meetings throughout the day. These dates will be posted in the Newsletter, and sign-up sheets are available in advance of each scheduled interview day. Specialty teachers are also available by appointment.

Parents are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this one-on-one time with their child(ren)’s teacher(s) to discuss their progress, challenges and strengths, and to come up with strategies to offer more support if needed. This is a good time to bring up any observations or concerns, and to mention family events that may impact their child's behaviour or learning at school. Parents and teachers alike benefit from each other’s perspectives and experience in understanding and meeting the needs of the child.

**Email and texting policy**

Email is an important communication tool used by teachers, parents, and administrators. Email can also cause miscommunication and difficulty when used indiscriminately. The number of emails being received can easily become overly time consuming. The following is our school policy on the use of email:

* Healthy communication of issues and questions regarding a child or class is best done in person. Please attempt to speak directly with the other person, using email only to set up a time and date to meet.
* Email is a very important form of communication at SWS. If a family does not use email at all, or on a regular basis, it is the responsibility of the family to request printed copies from the teacher and administrative staff.
* Email can be used by a teacher to update parents or guardians about a child’s progress.
* If you need to have a conversation with a teacher or administrator outside of regularly scheduled events you may request a meeting via email to discuss an issue directly.
* Sharing emails with children and students is not permitted.
* Email is not the proper form of communication when the topic is in any way emotionally charged or when a conversation is required. We recommend that you wait 24 hours before writing emails when you are feeling anxious or upset, and then only use email to request an in-person meeting.
* Email is not to be used as a means of describing events particularly when it is second or third hand information. Please take the time to confirm that information is complete and correct by talking in person or by telephone with the teacher or parent who was present.
* SWS cannot guarantee that all emails and text messages will be reviewed and responded to within any specific period of time. Email and text messaging should not be used for emergencies or time-sensitive matters.
* Families and those associated with SWS shall not include Sunrise staff, students, or volunteers on any email lists, group chats, or give out the email address or phone number to anyone else.
* Sending out group emails that do not pertain to school business or class activities (ie. Field trips, concerts, class potlucks etc…) is not permitted.
* Soliciting personal business or promotions using class email lists is not permitted.
* Using the class list to share opinions or promote a cause can cause harm to our school community and is not permitted.
* All addresses should be blind carbon copied (Bcc) in order to respect privacy and to avoid streams of personal responses due to the use of the ‘reply all” button on group emails.
* When emails are sent to a group, please refrain from using the ‘reply all’ button for personal replies.
* Emails should only be sent to those directly affected and should be kept succinct.
* Appropriate language should be used at all times.
* Texting may be available to update the office of a child’s absence, lateness or early pick-up.
* Check with individuals about their texting preferences.

##

## **Process for Resolving Concerns**

A healthy community requires all within the community to model positive behaviours. We expect that disagreements and conflicts will arise from time to time; this is the nature of our human existence. We expect to address and resolve conflicts through honest, respectful communications and good faith efforts to reach resolution with a commitment to resolving disputes with integrity.

If you have a specific concern, please speak immediately to your child’s teacher or the person with whom you have the concern. If you have a more general concern about school operations , a meeting by appointment is preferable to an informal contact. In the event that you have issues in resolving a concern, please refer to Appendix B: Communications Protocol (below) for guidance in pursuing a resolution of the matter.

In order to promote positive, productive and healthy communication between members of the school community, we ask that all members of the school community follow these principles:

1. Strive to communicate well, with honesty and integrity.
2. Involve and inform all who are affected by a decision.
3. Share our own thoughts and feelings rather than jump to conclusions or place blame.
4. Listen carefully to others and check to make sure we understand, rather than make judgments.
5. Work together with each other’s suggestions towards positive solutions.
6. Try and refrain from getting involved in issues that are not our own issues.
7. Attempt to embrace new ideas in a non-reactive way.
8. When feeling criticized, look for some kernel of truth in the criticism.
9. Try to understand the critic’s perspective and clearly state our own.
10. Show appreciation for others’ communication skills.
11. Take into account that we all come from different backgrounds and some peoples’ communication styles may be different from our own; embrace them accordingly.
12. Do not take personal issues we have with another to outside parties other than to seek assistance in resolution through the Communications Protocol.
13. Seize the opportunity to express gratitude, care, forgiveness, and respect for everyone.

## **Parent Support & Participation**

A Waldorf School is born out of a free social and cultural deed; it relies solely on the gifts of the individuals who support it, both morally and economically.

Creating continuity between school and home life helps a child feel safe and grounded and can come about through your active interest and involvement in life at school. You are welcome and encouraged to participate through various channels outlined by the PA and the teachers. Active support is needed on the Parent Association and the Board of Directors and in the work that is required to maintain and beautify our school. Parents are invited to talk to the Parent Association or Board Members about committee work. Such active participation is the life-blood of the school’s well-being; without it, the school cannot exist.

 Please respect disciplinary and health and safety measures taken by the Sunrise faculty.

## **Sunrise Waldorf School Parent Association**

The Parent Association is a community-building organization, serving as the vehicle for full parental involvement in the life of the school community. It is an independent entity with its own budget financed by fundraising. Its purposes are:

* To contribute to the intellectual, physical, financial, social and cultural climate of the school community
* To consult with the Board and Faculty on parent issues
* To promote cooperation between families and the school
* To assist parents and advocate on their behalf
* To actively support the school’s festival life

All parents and guardians of Sunrise Waldorf students are automatically members of the Parent Association and are welcome to participate and vote.

### **Parents Supporting Teachers**

Here are some ways you can support our teachers:

1. **Supporting the dress code.**
2. **Supporting our stance regarding electronic media**. This means eliminating or strictly limiting and monitoring children’s use of media including television, video games, computers, and handheld devices at home.
3. **Establishing daily rhythm at home with regular bedtimes and healthy meals:** Pop, candy, chocolate, and gum stay home at all times. Predictable bedtimes and routines add to a child’s security. Music and news on the car radio coming to school should be avoided.
4. **What Not to Bring to School.** HIgh quality school supplies are provided for the students. Please do not send your child with supplies. In addition, all toys and games should stay at home unless a teacher has specifically asked for an item from home to be brought in. Teacher will provide a list of personal items, such as extra clothes and indoor shoes, that your child should bring to school. Cell phones and electronics, including wearable electronics are strictly prohibited.
5. **Supporting the authority and expertise of the teacher.** Please treat calls home and incident reports with seriousness to help avoid misbehaviour, suspension or expulsion. Please do not undermine the teacher’s authority in front of the child but rather model a positive and supportive attitude in your words and actions. If you have questions about decisions the teacher makes, bring those directly to the teacher when your child is not present.

**Class Parent Role**

Class Parents are a valuable asset to the school for various reasons:

1) They form a helpful bridge for communication between class teachers and the other parents of the class:

2) They can support the teacher in numerous ways. Here are some ideas of ways that Class Parents can support the teacher:

* Organize holiday, birthday, and year-end gifts
* Organize flowers for the room
* Organize other needs for the classroom, such as work-bees, sewing groups for pillows or crayon cases, donating items etc.
* Communicate information from the teacher regarding school events, parent evenings and so on.
* Organize food trains for a teacher or parent who needs extra care, and so on

3) They communicate to the class parent body information from the Parent Association, for example PA organized events.

4) They organize faculty snack (schedule provided by the PA). This is usually three times a year for each class.

 5) They can actively welcome new families and help with integration.

Ideally each class will have two Class Parents, the primary Class Parent taking on organizational and communication role, and a Festival Parent being responsible for organizing festival activities for the class. The Class Parent is either chosen by the teacher, nominated by other parents, volunteers themselves, or any combination of the above, at the discretion of the class teacher. A Class Parent is encouraged to serve in this role for two years, and to be active in recruiting a new one at the end of their term to ensure continuity. Class Parents are strongly encouraged to attend PA meetings and take interest in PA initiatives; however, taking active positions on the PA is not expected as this can become a lot of work.

It is important that the teacher feels able to trust and collaborate with the Class Parent. A good partnership can be a huge support to the class, the teacher, and consequently to the well-being of the school culture. This role thus requires a true commitment to Sunrise and some level of impartiality. Strong biases or opinions about people, groups or school decisions will be detrimental to the school culture. While it is natural that there will be certain preferences as a Class Parent, it is important that your communication approach inclusive and exemplifies and promotes positive, productive, and healthy communication .

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### **Teachers and Parents in Partnership**

Regular communication about a child's progress validates the parents’ and teacher’s mutual concern for the child. Knowing what is happening at home will greatly benefit the teacher’s understanding of the child.

Teachers will make every effort to communicate their expectations and needs to the parents (via regular newsletters, parent evenings, Parent Teacher Conferences, phone calls and interviews). In the event that a student is suspended, teachers will put much thought into reinstatement of the child by meeting with the child, parent(s) and the Education Director or a CCG (Care Coordinating Group) member. The CCG holds various tools and processes for supporting children and parents in overcoming challenges, and can assist teachers, students and parents in implementing these.

Teachers understand that parents know the child best and must make decisions about what is best for their wellbeing. If difficulties arise, the teachers will work with parents without judgement in order to support and help to bring about the best outcome.

**APPENDIX B: Communications Protocol**

When an adult member of our school community (parent, teacher, staff, volunteer, etc.) has a concern regarding any aspect of the school, the following steps should be taken to address these concerns:

**Step 1**

Preferably, you should approach the adult party or parties directly involved with the issue to discuss the concern in a private conversation. For example, a parent concerned about classroom issues should make an appointment with the class teacher as a first step to addressing the issue, if possible. If you are not comfortable speaking directly to the other party, please skip to step two.

**Step 2**

If you do not feel there is a resolution to your concern following your conversation with the other party (or if you have skipped Step 1 because you do not feel comfortable speaking to the party directly involved with the issue), please schedule a meeting to speak to the Education Director (for issues related to teaching and learning) or theHead of School (for issues related to school operations) about your concern. Your concerns are important to the school and we are commited to a timely resolution for all issues. A meeting by appointment is preferable and can be scheduled through the office.

If your concern directly involves the Head of School, the Care Coordinating Group is designated to act in place of the Head of School throughout the process described below.

**Step 3**

The Head of School will listen to your concerns,, the steps taken to date to address the issue (if any), and the desired outcome. The Head of School will also discuss with you the level of confidentiality you require regarding the concerns you are bringing (e.g., do you wish to remain anonymous) and will outline the limitations, if any, that your wishes regarding confidentiality may place on the ability to follow through with resolving the issue.

**Step 4**

After the meeting with the Head of School, he/she will investigate and provide a response within a reasonable timeframe. If no immediate resolution is possible, you will be notified of the course of action planned and a timeline for pursuing resolution of the concern. It is the duty of the Head of School to keep you informed throughout the process and to facilitate as quick a resolution to your concern as possible.

**Step 5**

Depending on the nature of your concern, the Head of School may refer the issue to the individual, committee or authority best suited to resolve the issue in a timely manner, for example, the CCG for interpersonal conflicts; the Education Director for pedagogical issues; the Sunrise Education Society Board of Directors for legal concerns and so on. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to make this determination and to ensure that the body the issue is referred to acts in a timely manner to address the issue. The Head of School is also responsible for ensuring that any parties with a conflict of interest are not involved in considering or influencing a resolution to the issue. The body that the issue has been referred to will follow procedures mandated by school policies to resolve your concern. The Head of School will ensure that the procedures to be followed are explained to you fully.

For concerns directly involving the Head of School, the Sunrise Educational Society Board of Directors will always be notified in addition to any individual, committee or authority chosen to resolve the issue.

**Step 6. Appeal Process**

1. Requests for appeal may be directed in writing to the Vice President of the Sunrise Educational Society within 7 days of notification of the original decision.
2. The Vice President of the Sunrise Educational Society will then form an ad hoc committee consisting of two Board members, one or two Faculty members plus the Vice President of the Society. Potential Appeal Committee members must not have had hearing, nor have influence or bias toward or into the original decision. The Vice President of the Society will chair the Appeal Committee and has discretion as to its make-up and structure.
3. The Appeal Committee will meet within 5 working days of the request for appeal to decide whether or not to hear the appeal. If the committee decides to hear the appeal, the appeal process should be completed within 21 days of the appeal request. The complete appeal review process must not exceed 21 days.