

High School Parent Handbook 2026

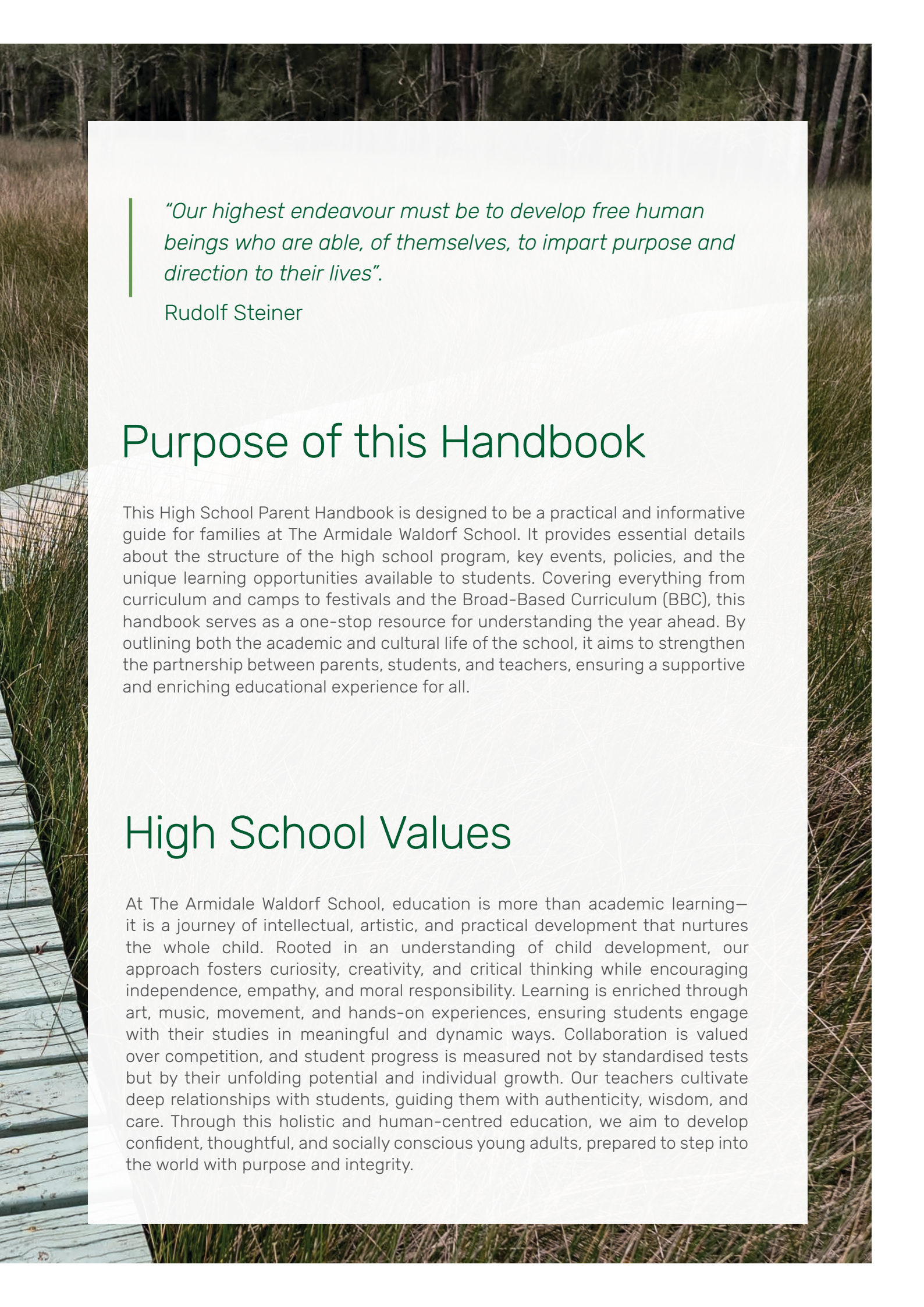


The Armidale
Waldorf School
and Boongaiai Preschool
FOR RUDOLF STEINER EDUCATION



Contents

Purpose of this Handbook	3
High School Values	3
High School Staff	4
What to bring to school	9
Stages of Development	10
Student Support	12
How you can be involved	13
Subjects	
Main Lessons & Weekly Lessons	14
Broad Based Curriculum	17
Outdoor Education	18
The Roles of Plays	19
Seasonal Festivals	20
Physical Education	21
Music	22
Senior Years Program (Class 11/12)	23
Policies and Assessments	
Restorative Practices	24
Mobile Phone Policy	25
Stage 4 Assessment Policy	26

A wooden boardwalk winds through tall grass and a forest. The boardwalk is made of light-colored wooden planks and leads into a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The grass is tall and green, with some dry stalks visible. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

“Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings who are able, of themselves, to impart purpose and direction to their lives”.

Rudolf Steiner

Purpose of this Handbook

This High School Parent Handbook is designed to be a practical and informative guide for families at The Armidale Waldorf School. It provides essential details about the structure of the high school program, key events, policies, and the unique learning opportunities available to students. Covering everything from curriculum and camps to festivals and the Broad-Based Curriculum (BBC), this handbook serves as a one-stop resource for understanding the year ahead. By outlining both the academic and cultural life of the school, it aims to strengthen the partnership between parents, students, and teachers, ensuring a supportive and enriching educational experience for all.

High School Values

At The Armidale Waldorf School, education is more than academic learning—it is a journey of intellectual, artistic, and practical development that nurtures the whole child. Rooted in an understanding of child development, our approach fosters curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking while encouraging independence, empathy, and moral responsibility. Learning is enriched through art, music, movement, and hands-on experiences, ensuring students engage with their studies in meaningful and dynamic ways. Collaboration is valued over competition, and student progress is measured not by standardised tests but by their unfolding potential and individual growth. Our teachers cultivate deep relationships with students, guiding them with authenticity, wisdom, and care. Through this holistic and human-centred education, we aim to develop confident, thoughtful, and socially conscious young adults, prepared to step into the world with purpose and integrity.

High School Staff



Chris O'Neill- Head of Secondary

Teaching Areas: HSIE

E: coneill@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

As the Head of Secondary at The Armidale Waldorf School, I find my role both stimulating and rewarding. Alongside strategic oversight of the High School, my responsibilities include timetabling, managing curriculum and compliance, and tackling whatever challenges come my way. My teaching career has spanned many educational settings in Australia, Germany, Austria, and Finland. Before joining TAWS, I spent many years at PLC Armidale, with a brief stint at Armidale Secondary College. I believe that rapport and relationships are the cornerstones of education, and it's through human connection that we inspire and learn from each other. I believe stories and education go hand in hand, a philosophy I hold dearly as a long-time history teacher. In my spare time, I enjoy spending time with my family, swimming, exploring the outdoors, and diving into history and philosophy books. My long-term goal is to finally complete my (long overdue) PhD.



Camilla Dubois - Senior Years (Class 11/12) Coordinator

Teaching Areas: HSIE, English

E: cdubois@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

I am the Senior Years (Class 11/12) Coordinator at The Armidale Waldorf School, which involves supervision, teaching and Guardianship for our Class 11/12 program (Stage 6). I teach English, History and Geography, with my current focus being on the Stage 6 courses 'Ancient History' and 'Society and Culture'. Over the last few years, I have played an integral role in the expansion of The Armidale Waldorf High School, in the areas of leadership, curriculum and compliance, and it has brought me great satisfaction and joy to see our learning community flourish and grow. Education is an awakening: an invitation for students to encounter themselves and the world around them in a rich and purposeful way, so that they may find meaning and direction in their own lives. In Steiner Education, this is the forefront of everything we do, making this school a very special place to be. Prior to becoming a teacher, I worked in the film industry in logistics, and as a journalist in print media. I live with my family on a small holding just outside of Armidale, with far too many pets, a big garden and an overflowing bookcase.

Class Guardians

Class Guardians play a vital role in supporting students throughout their high school journey. They provide consistent guidance, care, and leadership, ensuring each student feels supported emotionally, socially, and academically.

The Guardians:

- Are a trusted advisor for students, someone they can always turn to.
- Accompany their class on camps, deepening connection and shared experiences.
- Maintain a close relationship with parents, serving as the first point of contact for concerns or questions.
- Help navigate challenges and celebrate achievements, seeing that each child is seen and supported.



**Cathlin Duggan-Smith –
Class 7 Guardian**

Teaching Areas: HSIE,
PDHPE, Art, Photography

E: cduggansmith@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

I bring teaching experience across Public and Steiner education in the Hunter Valley and Western NSW, specialising in visual art, visual design, and photography. Over the years, I have also taught HSIE, English, PDHPE, Wellbeing, and craft/design and technology. Having witnessed my own children thrive in Steiner education from preschool to high school, I am passionate about its holistic approach. My teaching practice centres on nurturing the whole child, helping students understand themselves, their growing worlds, and their social connections. I aim to foster caring, thoughtful, and socially aware future citizens. I am excited to take on the role of Year 7 Guardian, alongside teaching Main Lessons and Weekly Lessons. Outside school, I enjoy bush walks with my family, showing my fluffy Akita at dog shows.



**Michelle Le Gall – Class 8
Guardian & Student Support
Coordinator**

Teaching Areas: French, HSIE,
English

E: mlegall@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

As the High School French teacher at The Armidale Waldorf School, I also oversee Learning Support in the High School. In addition to teaching French, I teach a number of Main Lessons and Weekly Lessons. One of my cherished responsibilities is organising the Winter Festival – a magical event where I guide students in creating lanterns, choreographing fire performances, and bringing this beautiful celebration to life. I have been part of TAWS for six wonderful years and previously taught French at NEGS, enriching my teaching journey. Outside the classroom, I am passionate about travelling, immersing myself in stories through books and movies, and enjoying the challenge of a good board game.



Finlay Debreceeny – Class 9/10 Guardian

Teaching Areas: Science

E: fdebreceeny@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

As well as stepping into the role of Class 9/10 Guardian – about which I am very excited – I teach Science, specialising in areas relating to Chemistry and Biology. I retrained as a teacher after transitioning from a rewarding career in Laboratory Science, where I spent nearly a decade working in medical and hospital laboratories. I bring with me valuable insights and practical skills from my previous profession, enriching my approach to education. I deeply value the Steiner approach to education and firmly believe in the importance of nurturing the whole child. This philosophy resonates with me, as I strive to foster and support all aspects of students' development throughout their school journey. Building meaningful relationships with students is a priority, and I am committed to creating an environment where trust and rapport thrive, ensuring every student feels seen, heard, and valued. Outside of my professional life, I am passionate about all things music, enjoy crocheting and knitting, and tending to my chickens, dog and gardens.

Class Teachers



Siobhan O'Hanlon

Teaching Areas: Business Studies and Agriculture

E: sohanlon@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

I am the Science and Agriculture teacher in the High School Faculty at TAWS. Over the past two years, I've been developing the High School Ag Plot, a space where students learn about sustainable food production through hands-on projects that foster critical thinking, ecological understanding, and community spirit. I also teach Business Studies to our Senior Class. Before joining TAWS, I worked in molecular ecology, using DNA tools for wildlife conservation and forensics – a career that took me across the globe. I've always loved sharing science stories through workshops, public events, and even a radio segment in Sydney, but I felt something was missing: the deeper connections that come with teaching. At TAWS, I value building relationships with students and tailoring learning to their interests and stories. Outside of school, I enjoy silversmithing, playing the violin, and spending time in the garden with my husband, two daughters, and our large dog.



Georgie Ostenfeld

Teaching Areas: Music

E: gostenfeld@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

As the Music Teacher at The Armidale Waldorf School, I have the privilege of working with students across all ages, from the youngest to the oldest. I teach Music in Classes 1 to 8, contribute to the music for festivals and plays, and lead individual instrumental lessons and ensembles. One of my favourite roles is singing with Classes 7 to 10 twice a week, creating beautiful, harmonious sounds together. Before joining TAWS, I gained extensive musical training and experience that took me across Australia and the globe. Highlights include performing with the Australian National Academy of Music and playing in the orchestra for Queensland Ballet. For me, music is a universal source of connection and imagination that nourishes our inner wellbeing. I strive to give young people the tools to explore music deeply, so it remains a meaningful part of their lives.



Sam Boyd

Teaching Areas: Mathematics

E: sboyd@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

I am the Mathematics Teacher and Numeracy Specialist, roles I find deeply rewarding. While passionate about all things numbers, I enjoy incorporating art and real-world connections into my lessons to make mathematics engaging and relatable for students. Before joining TAWS, I taught at Nowra High School on the South Coast. I then took a year and a half to travel across New South Wales with my children, a journey that deepened my appreciation for education and connection. I believe a learning environment should be a positive space that nurtures a child's physical, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. With an enriching and supportive atmosphere, I believe students can achieve great things. Outside of teaching, I enjoy reading, crocheting, cross-stitching, playing piano, and gardening.

Wellbeing



Elysia Butler- Wellbeing Facilitator

E: wellbeing@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

I came to The Armidale Waldorf School from Mount Isa in Western Queensland. I originally completed a Bachelor of Psychology, and after recently graduating with a Master of Social Work, I felt a strong calling to join TAWS. My passion lies in equipping children with wellbeing literacy and strategies to successfully navigate the ups and downs of modern life. At TAWS, I work alongside the Class Guardians, providing children with support and strategies to remain engaged in their learning. For some, this may simply mean having a safe and confidential space to discuss their concerns as they arise at school. For others, it may involve trialling new tools or strategies to identify and manage triggering situations, with the goal of building their capacity for resilience over time.

Student Learning Assistants



Susan Grant

E: sgrant@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

I am a passionate educator and creator with a love for all things artistic. Over the past four years, I've worked as a Student Learning Assistant at The Armidale Waldorf School, supporting students from Early Childhood to High School. Recently, I completed High School Teaching Foundations at Sydney Rudolf Steiner College with high distinctions, further deepening my connection to Waldorf education. My background in education support, art therapy, fine arts, and creative practices such as photography, ceramics, and dance has found an authentic expression at TAWS. I've enjoyed teaching ceramics in the Broad-Based Curriculum, choreographing fire fan performances for the Winter Festival, and leading creative activities for school events such as the Spring Festival, NAIDOC, and the Summer Festival. As a TAWS parent, I've cherished my son's journey from Play Time to Class 8. Outside of school, I love nature, bush meditation, yoga, and quietly enjoying a cup of tea with our pet sheep and ducks.



Michelle Wyatt

E: mywatt@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

As a Student Learning Assistant at The Armidale Waldorf School, I find my role deeply rewarding. Working closely with both students and teachers, I strive to enhance individual learning experiences and foster a supportive, engaging environment. My passion for education has also led me to pursue a teaching degree, inspired by the nurturing and creative atmosphere of the school. I have been in this role for almost a year, following a decade immersed in literature—a lifelong passion of mine. Outside of work, I enjoy cooking, gardening, and traveling, with the privilege of exploring many wonderful places over the years.



Izzy Bizo

I am an SLSO in the High School Faculty at TAWS. I will primarily be based with year 7 and am eager to help and support students as they transition into high school, helping students to engage and feel confident in a new environment. I am currently completing my Master of Teaching (Secondary) and am specialising in History, both Ancient and Modern, as well as Society and Culture. I'm a local of Armidale, finishing both high school and my bachelor's degree here. My undergraduate degree was based in history, making me value engagement with the past, exploring ideas and helping students to understand the world around them. When I'm not at work or studying, I'll more often than not be in my garden, growing weird and wonderful veggies and flowers for myself and my family to enjoy. Being in nature is very important to me and I will often go on hikes in the area with my partner.



What Your Child Needs to Bring to School

To make the most of each school day, it's important that students arrive equipped and ready to learn. Having the necessary materials ensures that our time in class is spent engaging with lessons rather than searching for spare supplies. While the school provides writing books and artistic tools such as coloured pencils, students are expected to bring the following essential items:

- Pens – any colours they like, but black and blue are essential
- Lead pencils
- Scissors
- Glue
- Ruler
- For Class 9/10: a calculator, preferably the Casio fx-82AU PLUS II, as it is user-friendly and well suited to mathematics. Class 7 and 8 may purchase this calculator if they wish, though lessons will primarily be conducted without one.
- Broad-brimmed hat – either brought from home or purchased from the school
- Drink bottle
- Nutritious Lunch – please avoid plastic packaging. Bento boxes, reusable containers are highly encouraged.

By ensuring your child has these items each day, we can create a smoother and more productive learning environment where students can focus fully on their education.



Stages of Development

Waldorf education recognises that child development follows a series of developmental stages, each associated with distinct cognitive, emotional, and social characteristics. These stages align with the evolving needs of students and inform how we structure our teaching, ensuring that lessons resonate deeply with students' lived experiences.

In high school, these stages emphasise independence, critical thinking, and social-emotional growth. Inspired by the Gesell Institute's research and Rudolf Steiner's insights, each year brings a new phase of self-discovery,

expansion, and inner reflection, which shapes the way students interact with their learning, peers, and the world.

Class 7 (Age 13) – The Mars Year: Inner Struggle and Growing Independence

- Strong push for independence – Students seek more autonomy and may withdraw from parents and teachers.
- Inner and outer tension – Energetic engagement in tasks but also prone to withdrawal and self-reflection.
- Critical and questioning – They challenge authority, scrutinise rules, and express dissatisfaction.
- Emotionally intense – Mood swings, deep thinking, and occasional melancholy are common.
- Social awareness grows – Friendships become more selective, and peer relationships matter more.
- Physical growth surges – Puberty advances rapidly, impacting energy levels and self-image.

- Learning needs – Engage students with hands-on activities, structured challenges, and opportunities for independent thinking while maintaining clear boundaries.

Class 8 (Age 14) – The Jupiter Year: Expansion, Confidence, and Idealism

- More social, lively, and expansive – Confidence grows, along with a sense of humour and joy in learning.
- Search for ideals – Developing a strong interest in justice, fairness, and ethics.
- Independence solidifies – Students balance group belonging with a growing sense of individuality.
- Increased cognitive capacity – Abstract thinking and logical reasoning improve.
- Expressive and energetic – More outspoken, eager for discussion, and willing to take on leadership.
- Physical and emotional robustness – Generally, a more stable and content year compared to Class 7.



- Learning needs – Provide opportunities for debate, deeper discussions on ethical dilemmas, and biographies of inspiring figures to nurture their expanding worldview.

Class 9 (Age 15) – The Saturn Year: Self-Reflection and Internal Turmoil

- Deep self-exploration – A shift from the outward confidence of Class 8 to introspection and questioning.
- Increased need for privacy – Students guard their inner world and are resistant to authority.
- Critical and analytical – Often sceptical, questioning everything, and resistant to being told what to think.
- More serious and sensitive – Prone to mood swings, self-doubt, and a need for deeper meaning.
- Desire for autonomy – Strong-willed and independent, yet still reliant on trusted adults.
- Refinement of thought – More precise in language, interested in philosophy and existential questions.
- Learning needs – Structure lessons to allow for personal inquiry, open-ended discussions, and problem-solving, while maintaining a steady and reassuring presence.

Class 10 (Age 16) – The Moon Year: Maturity, Relationships, and Strengthening Identity

- More emotionally balanced – Compared to the previous year, students become more at ease with themselves.
- Relationship-focused – Friendships and romantic relationships become central, and social interactions gain depth.
- Independent but cooperative – They value autonomy but are less resistant to guidance.
- More secure in their identity – A growing ability to make sense of who they are and where they fit.
- Intuitive and empathetic – They are more aware of others' feelings and social dynamics.
- Philosophical and idealistic – Some show interest in deeper questions about life, meaning, and spirituality.
- Learning needs – Encourage collaborative projects, mentorship opportunities, and reflective exercises to support their growing sense of responsibility and interconnectedness.

Student Support

“Every child is a unique individual; education must be concerned with the individuality of the child, so that their potential may unfold in freedom.”

Rudolf Steiner

Wellbeing & Class Guardians

Class Guardians play a vital role in supporting students throughout their high school journey. They provide steady guidance, care, and leadership so each young person feels supported socially, emotionally, and academically. As a trusted adult, they are someone students can turn to, and they walk alongside their class through camps and shared experiences that deepen connection.

Guardians build close partnerships with families and are the first point of contact for questions or concerns. They help students navigate challenges, celebrate growth and achievements, and notice when extra support may be helpful. When needed, they work with specialist staff, including our Wellbeing Facilitator, to arrange further wellbeing support so each child is truly seen, understood, and supported.

Collaborative Support

As a faculty, our teaching ethos considers students as individuals, with consideration to their current developmental stage. Where appropriate, our teaching staff discuss students' progress, and identify areas that require additional support, ensuring we have a collaborative, empathetic, and nurturing approach.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Advisor

Aunty Sharon Cutmore is our cultural advisor,

she supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and facilitates a culturally sensitive learning environment. She coordinates cultural experience such as NAIDOC Day and smoking ceremonies, and nurtures relationships between TAWS and external Elders and community members. For further information please email Aunty Sharon scutmore@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

Learning Support

Through our Learning Support Team, coordinated by Michelle Le Gall, we provide additional formalised learning support systems. Examples include:

- Dedicated Student Learning Assistants (SLAs), coordinated by Michelle Le Gall, provide extra support in the classroom, in small groups, or one-on-one.
- Adaptive PAT Testing – We use Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) to assess students' strengths and areas for improvement. These tests adjust the difficulty of questions as students answer, giving a clear picture of their learning needs. This helps us track progress over time and personalise support.
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) – For students who need additional support, we create IEPs in consultation with parents. These plans help us understand each student's learning needs and outline the best strategies to support them.

For any learning support matters, please contact Michelle Le Gall at mlegall@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

How you can be involved

At The Armidale Waldorf School, we believe that strong partnerships between parents and the school create the best learning environment for students. There are many ways you can be involved in your child's education and contribute to our school community:

- **Stay Connected** – Keep an open line of communication with your child's **Class Guardian**. Regular check-ins help ensure that any concerns or questions are addressed early and that we're all working together to support your child's learning and wellbeing.
- **Share Your Skills** – If you have expertise in a particular field, consider offering to be a **guest speaker or assisting with class projects**. Many of our Main Lessons benefit from real-world insights and experiences, and parent involvement can make learning even more meaningful.
- **Support Our School Environment** – Join our **working bees** to help maintain and enhance the school grounds. A well-kept, welcoming space makes a real difference in creating an environment where students feel inspired to learn and grow.
- **Help Students Be Prepared** – Ensure your child comes to school each day with the **required stationery, water bottle, hat, and other essentials**. Being properly equipped helps them stay focused and engaged in their lessons.
- **Clothing Matters** – Support the school by making sure your **child's clothing aligns with the school's dress code**. This helps maintain a sense of community and ensures students are dressed appropriately for learning and activities.
- **Respect the Mobile Phone Policy** – Assist the school by ensuring your child's **mobile phone use remains off** campus. Discuss with them why this policy is in place and how it supports their focus, social interactions, and overall wellbeing during school hours.



Main Lessons & Weekly Lessons

“The children must experience everything they learn.

The more they experience, the more they truly take in”.

Rudolf Steiner

Main Lessons

The Main Lesson is a core part of our approach to learning. Each Main Lesson immerses students in a single subject over an extended period of three to four weeks, allowing them to deeply engage with the content without the fragmentation of multiple subjects competing for their attention. This method fosters focused learning, interdisciplinary connections, and sustained exploration, enabling students to build knowledge in a way that feels both natural and meaningful.

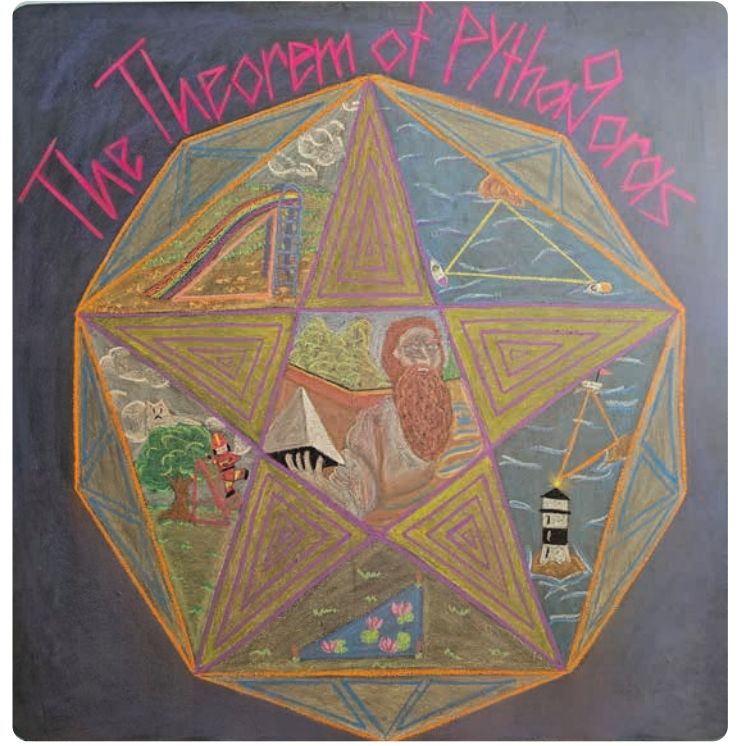
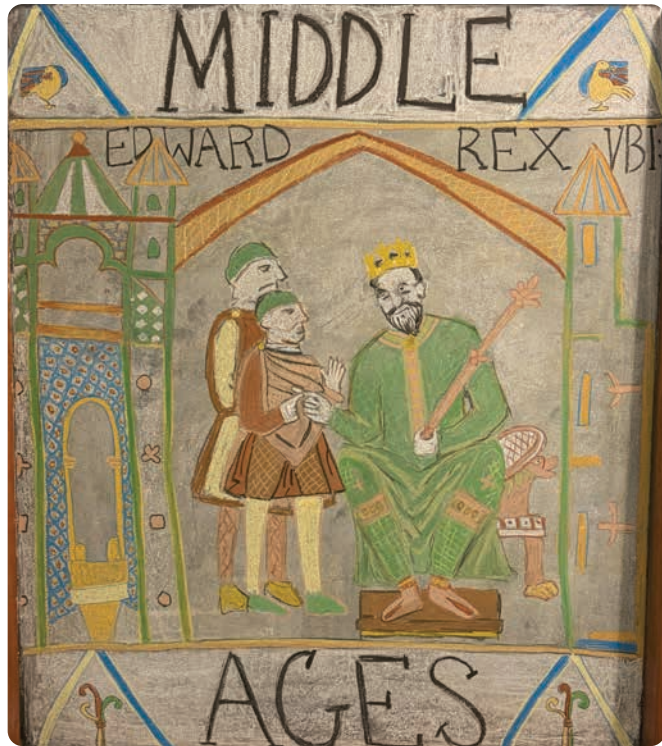
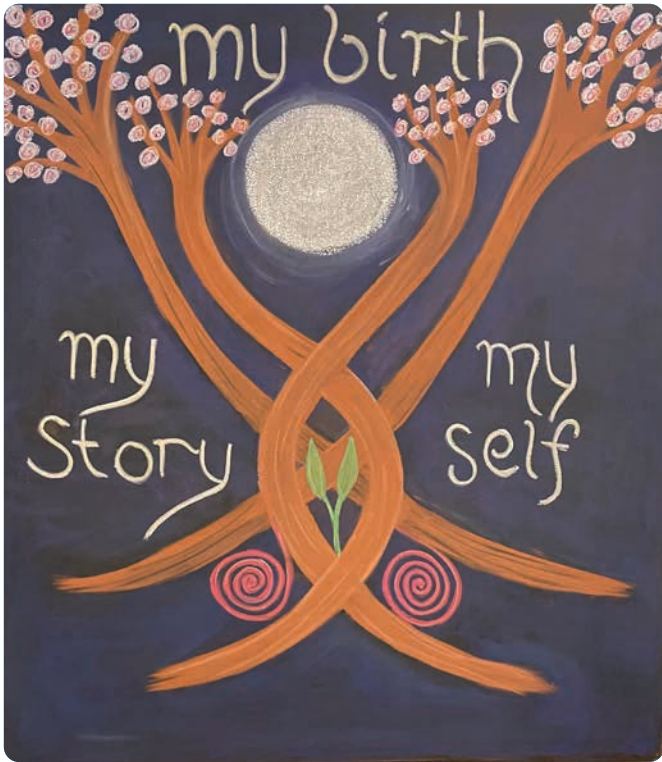
Philosophically, the Main Lesson structure aligns with an integrated, developmental approach to education. By dedicating an extended period to one topic, students have the time to absorb concepts, reflect, and engage with the material creatively and analytically. Many Main Lessons weave together different disciplines – history may intertwine with geography and literature, while science might incorporate mathematics and practical application. This approach not only deepens understanding but also cultivates curiosity and critical thinking.

Weekly Lessons

It is important that students see weekly lessons as just as valuable as the Main Lesson. They provide essential practice, ongoing skill development, and a steady rhythm of learning across different disciplines. By fully engaging in both Main and weekly lessons, students experience a rich and holistic education, where deep inquiry, skill-building, and creative expression work in harmony.

A key element of every Main Lesson is a project, which is typically assessed and requires students to create something that incorporates research, art, and their newfound knowledge from the lesson. These projects encourage independent thought, creativity, and synthesis of learning, allowing students to express their understanding in a meaningful way. Ample time is provided within the Main Lesson – usually towards the end of the block – so students can fully engage with their projects without the burden of excessive homework.

While it is called the Main Lesson, this name does not diminish the importance of weekly lessons, which run alongside it. These subject-specific classes follow structured units of work and play a crucial role in rounding out the curriculum. Subjects such as mathematics focus on consolidating essential skills, while other weekly lessons, such as music or language studies, provide continuity and balance. Often, these lessons complement the Main Lesson by reinforcing related concepts or developing practical skills.



Main Lesson Schedule 2026

	Wk1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8	Wk 9	Wk 10
Term 1	7	HSIE – Geography Water in the World (Finlay)	PDHPE. Processes (Cat)	Camp 1 Bonding	PDHPE Caring for My Life Processes (Cat)	Maths. Maths in Nature (Sam) 1				
	8	Maths. Change and Rhythm (Sam)	Science. Water (Finlay)			Camp 1 Geography. (Michelle, SLA)	HSIE – G . Lay of the Land (Cat)			
	9/10	HSIE – History Australia and the Modern World (Chris)	Maths. Number and Algebra (Sam)			Science. Organic Chemistry (Finlay)				
Term 2	7	HSIE – History & Geography. Polynesian Expansion across the Pacific (Cat)	English & Drama. PLAY – King Arthur (Cat)					English. The Power of the Word		
	8	Maths. Money in Society (Sam)	Science. Chemistry (Finlay)					HSIE – History & Geography. The Ancient World: China and Egypt (Cat)		
	9/10	Science Camp 1 Resourcing	Science. Environmental Resources (Finlay)	HSIE – Geography. The Modern World: The Rise of China & India (Sam)				Science . Waves (Finlay)		
Term 3	7	HSIE – History. The Middle Ages (Cat)	HSIE – History. Aboriginal Contact History (Cat)	Camp 2 Yuraygir Coastal Walk				Maths. Pythagoras (Sam) 2		
	8	Maths. Platonic Solids (Sam)	English & Drama. PLAY – The Canterbury Tales (Michelle)					English. Wish, Wonder and Surprise Camp 2 (Writing)		
	9/10	English & Drama. PLAY – Othello (Finlay)	Maths. Statistics (Sam)					English. The World of Shakespeare (Michelle)		
Term 4	7	Science / PDHPE. Birthing and Connections (Siobhan)	7 Science Diversity of Life (Finlay)					Science. Mechanics (Finlay)		
	8	Science. Cells (Finlay)	HSIE – Geography. Geographical Regions: Contrasts and Connections (Cat)					History / Art. The Renaissance (Cat)		
	9/10	HSIE – G . Human Lives, Urban Landscapes (Michelle)	Camp 2. Sydney service camp	HSIE – G . Human Lives, Urban Landscapes (Michelle)				Maths. Projective Geometry (Sam) – Class 9 only		

Broad Based Curriculum (Class 9/10)

Connection with heart and hands.

The Class 9/10 Broad-Based Curriculum (BBC) is a thoughtfully crafted Visual Arts program that places a strong emphasis on creativity and hands-on learning. While this subject falls under Visual Arts, it is designed to provide students with a dynamic and enriching alternative to more traditional subject delivery. The BBC offers a much-needed creative outlet, allowing students to explore their artistic potential in an immersive, practical way. This approach centres individuality, practical skills, and imaginative thinking, fostering a well-rounded educational experience that supports both personal growth and academic development. The BBCs will be taught by our talented High School teachers; the BBCs offer an immersive experience where students can fully engage with their creative projects. At the end of Terms 2 and 4, students will showcase their work at a special BBC presentation evening, sharing their achievements with parents and celebrating their progress.

Broad Based Curriculum Subjects

Term 1: Portraiture

In Term 1, students explore portraiture as a way of observing and understanding the human face. Through drawing and painting, they learn to notice proportion, expression, and character, developing technical skills alongside patience, empathy, and careful observation.

Term 2: Winter Festival Lantern Making

During Term 2, students create lanterns for the Winter Festival, engaging in a hands-on artistic process that combines design, craftsmanship, and meaning. This work supports fine motor skills and creativity while contributing to a shared cultural event that connects students to the wider school community.

Term 3: Mosaics

In Term 3, students work with mosaic techniques, exploring pattern, colour, and form through the careful arrangement of materials. This slow, methodical art form encourages focus, perseverance, and attention to detail, resulting in both individual artworks and a strong sense of accomplishment.

Term 4: Photography

In Term 4, students are introduced to photography as a creative and observational art form. They learn to consider composition, light, and perspective, using photography to explore how images can capture mood, story, and meaning in the world around them.



Outdoor Education

The importance of camps within the curriculum.

Camps are an integral part of the high school experience, offering students hands-on learning, personal growth, and a deeper connection to the world around them.

Each camp is thoughtfully designed to extend classroom learning into real-world experiences, providing a rich and immersive connection to the curriculum. Camps are considered part of the curriculum, and it is compulsory for students to attend. In addition, attending the pre-camp parent information session is a requirement, to ensure parents are fully informed and any concerns or questions can be addressed in advance.

Beyond academics, camps build resilience, independence, and a sense of responsibility. These experiences foster self-confidence, perseverance, and an appreciation for nature, while also strengthening their ability to work together as a group.

Equally important is the team-building and bonding that takes place on camp. Time away from school strengthens the relationships between students, Class Guardian and teachers, creating a shared sense of identity and belonging within the class.

Camps at TAWS offer a unique space where students learn, explore, and connect with the world, building skills and relationships that will stay with them for years to come.



The Role of Plays

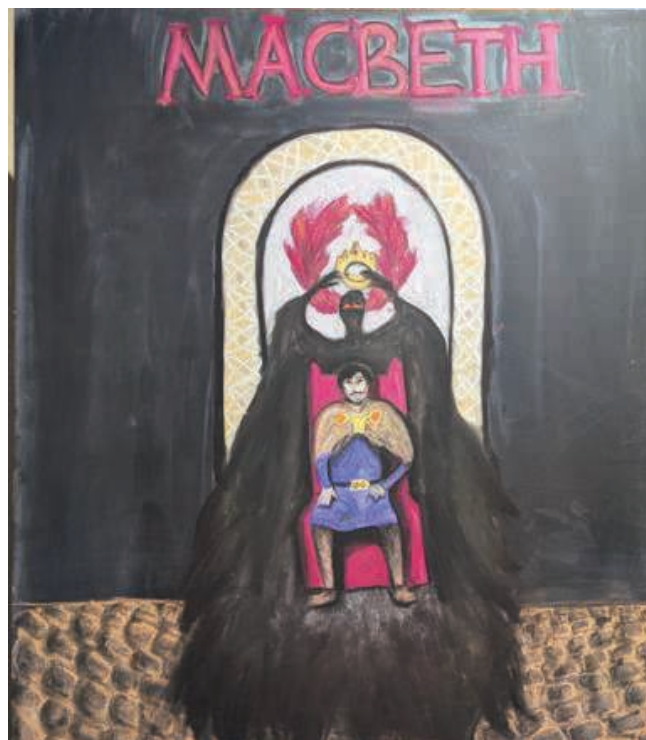
Expression and the spoken word.

Plays offer students a unique opportunity to delve into creative self-expression and meaningful storytelling. Each play is carefully chosen to align with the developmental stage of the class, often addressing themes that resonate deeply with their current life experiences and intellectual growth. These performances challenge students to step beyond their comfort zones, fostering confidence, teamwork, and resilience.

Importantly, the plays allow students to showcase their talents to a broader audience, reinforcing their sense of accomplishment and connection to their community. For Class 9 and 10, performing at the Armidale Playhouse adds an extra dimension, providing a public platform that underscores the importance of presenting their work in a professional

and respected setting.

Within the Steiner educational framework, plays are more than artistic exercises; they are integral to the holistic development of the individual, nurturing imagination, empathy, and a profound understanding of human relationships and social dynamics. They also complement academic work, as students often draw on the historical, literary, or cultural themes explored in their lessons to bring their performances to life. This blend of art, intellect, and community engagement ensures that the tradition of class plays remains a cherished and transformative experience for students and their families.



Seasonal Festivals

Nature, rhythm and community.

Seasonal festivals are a valued tradition at The Armidale Waldorf School, marking the rhythm of the year and fostering a deep connection between students, nature, and the changing world around them. These festivals offer moments to pause, reflect, and celebrate, acknowledging not only the external shifts of the seasons but also the inner growth of students as they move through their educational journey.

Participation in these festivals is an important part of life in the High School. When High School students take part - through music, drama, ceremony, or practical support - they help carry and uphold the cultural life of the school. Their involvement is deeply valued, and it is especially meaningful for Primary School students to see the older students participating with care, confidence, and responsibility. In this way, the High School plays an essential role in modelling engagement, leadership, and reverence for shared traditions.

Each festival carries its own unique character, blending music, storytelling, art, and community participation to create a rich and meaningful experience. Together, these festivals strengthen the bonds within our school community and form part of the living lifeblood of the school, where all age groups come together in shared celebration.

Autumn Festival - 31 March 2026

A time of gratitude and reflection as we acknowledge the shift towards the cooler months, embracing themes of balance and harvest.

Winter Festival - 23 June 2026

A celebration of inner warmth, light, and resilience during the darkest time of the year, highlighted by lanterns, fire performances, and a sense of quiet contemplation.

Spring Festival - 22 Sept 2026

A joyful expression of renewal and growth, filled with vibrant colours, music, and movement to welcome the returning light and energy of the season.

Summer Festival - 8 Dec 2026

A celebration of culmination and transformation, marking the end of the school year with lightness, festivity, and a sense of looking forward.



Physical Education

Development of healthy body and mind.

Sport is an integral part of the High School PDHPE curriculum at The Armidale Waldorf School and supports the balanced development of the whole young person. Through purposeful movement and structured sporting experiences, students develop physical skills, resilience, cooperation, and a sense of fair play, while also learning to meet challenge with confidence and self-awareness. Our sport program recognises the developmental needs of adolescents and values participation, inclusion, and ethical engagement over competition alone. In alignment with NSW syllabus requirements, lessons are thoughtfully designed to build movement competence, teamwork, and positive attitudes toward physical activity, fostering wellbeing, enjoyment, and healthy habits that can be carried into adult life.

Term 1: Volleyball and Swimming

Students begin the year with a combined focus on volleyball and swimming, supporting both teamwork and individual skill development. Volleyball lessons emphasise communication, coordination, and game awareness, giving students opportunities to develop confidence, cooperation, and leadership within a team setting. Alongside this, swimming lessons focus on stroke development, fitness, and water confidence. The program recognises that students arrive with varying levels of experience in both areas, and lessons are structured to support growth, challenge, and skill refinement in a positive and encouraging environment.

Term 2: Winter Festival Preparation

With the Winter Festival as a major event in the school calendar, Term 2 sport is dedicated to preparing for the fire performance. Students learn choreography, develop coordination, and gradually incorporate props, beginning with unlit staves and progressing to lit fire staves or fire fans for older students. This process fosters focus, discipline, and confidence, culminating in a stunning and well-rehearsed performance for the festival.

Term 3: Gymnastics at the Armidale Gymnastics Club

Students take part in a structured gymnastics program at Armidale Gymnastics Club, where they develop strength, flexibility, balance, and spatial awareness. Gymnastics is beneficial at all stages of child development, helping students to build coordination, resilience, and confidence in movement. It also supports overall body awareness and control, benefiting students in both sport and everyday physical activities.

Term 4: Netball

In Term 4, students take part in a mixed netball program that is designed to be accessible, enjoyable, and inclusive for all. Lessons focus on movement, passing, positioning, and teamwork, with an emphasis on participation, cooperation, and having fun. Activities are structured so that students of all experience levels can engage confidently, whether they are new to the game or building on existing skills. Through modified games and supportive teaching, netball provides an energetic and social way for students to finish the year, strengthening fitness, connection, and positive group dynamics.



Music

“When the human being hears music, they have a sense of wellbeing, because these tones harmonise with what they have experienced in the world of their spiritual home.”

Rudolf Steiner

The music program, led by Georgie, is deeply rooted in singing, movement, and creative expression. Through weekly music classes for Classes 7 and 8 and bi-weekly Class 7-10 singing sessions, students engage in an enriching and communal musical experience. Music is a vital part of human culture and connection, and this program fosters not only musical skills but also collaboration, confidence, and wellbeing.

Class 7 and 8 Music Lessons:

Students participate in group composition tasks, developing their ability to create music collaboratively. Listening tasks introduce the class to a wide range of musical genres, enhancing their appreciation and understanding of music. Incorporating movement-based activities allow students to experience rhythm and musical structure physically, deepening their engagement with music.

Class 7-10 Singing:

Singing in a group has been shown to synchronise heartbeats, stimulate the vagus nerve, and reduce stress and anxiety, fostering both emotional and physical wellbeing. We bring the classes together for a bi-weekly singing session where students sing and move together, experiencing the harmony and benefits that group singing brings. Over the year, students develop confidence in vocal expression, learning to listen and blend with others while building a sense of community.

Music in Seasonal Festivals:

Students are actively involved in music-making for the school’s seasonal festivals, contributing to the rich cultural and artistic life of the school.

Festival performances give students the opportunity to apply their musical skills in a meaningful, celebratory context.



Senior Years Program (Class 11/12)

While the Preliminary and HSC courses at TAWS represent a departure from the Steiner curriculum, the impulse and manner of our teaching continues to draw from Steiner pedagogy, philosophy and practice, while satisfying the requirements of the NSW Education Standards Authority and the HSC process.

In the Senior Years, we teach through the three ideals of truth, beauty and goodness, drawing these out through all subject areas. Extended camps, creative expression, personal connection and engagement continue to form part of a suite of practices that work to lead your child to flourishing. Students enjoy a senior lounge and kitchen; close, supportive relationships with their teachers and peers; and opportunities to get involved in collaborative decision-making and demonstrate leadership.

The school delivers Preliminary and HSC Courses using the 'compressed curriculum model'. A compressed delivery allows completion of three Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC courses (including an HSC examination for each one) in one calendar year. Instead of studying six subjects across two years, students study three subjects to completion one year, and three subjects the next. Students working with just three subjects at a time can consider them more deeply and more easily, leading to improved engagement, academic outcomes and wellbeing during the most challenging and exciting years of their education.

Community partnerships form an integral part of the Senior Years Program. Students, teachers and parents/carers work together to ensure that our young people complete their high school education feeling empowered, inspired, prepared and proud. Our reciprocal agreement with PLC Armidale marks a deep interest in sharing expertise between schools in Armidale. Students may attend PLC to undertake subjects not offered at TAWS. The school has also formed a partnership with the University of New England (UNE) to develop a Visiting Academics Program, bringing the latest developments in research and human understanding to our students in their subject area. School-based apprenticeships are also available.

For more information, please refer to our Senior Years Information Booklet. You can request a copy by emailing enrol@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

Restorative Practices

At TAWS, we recognise that conflict is a natural part of life, and that true learning happens when students are guided towards understanding, accountability, and personal growth. Our approach to discipline is built on mutual respect, self-reflection, and repairing relationships, rather than punishment alone. This aligns with the principles of Waldorf education, where discipline is both constructive and restorative, supporting students in developing self-mastery while maintaining an orderly and harmonious school environment.

What Happens When Conflict or Harm Occurs?

Parents may sometimes ask, 'My child was hurt – what happens now?' or 'How will this be handled?' Our school follows a restorative approach that prioritises both the well-being of the affected student and the learning and accountability of the student responsible for harm.

Rather than simply assigning blame or punishment, restorative practice encourages open dialogue, understanding, and meaningful resolution. This means:

- Students are given the opportunity to explain their perspective and reflect on their actions.
- Those affected are heard and acknowledged, ensuring that their feelings and experiences are validated.
- The focus is on repairing harm and restoring relationships, rather than punitive measures that may not lead to long-term change.

Key Elements of Our Restorative Approach

We use restorative practices in both informal conversations and structured processes, depending on the situation. These may include:

- Guided discussions between students with teacher support.
- Restorative circle time, allowing the class to explore shared experiences and develop empathy.
- One-on-one reflection sessions, helping students understand the impact of their actions.
- Collaborative problem-solving, where students take responsibility and find ways to repair the harm.

Our process

includes key restorative questions to guide reflection:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- How do you think your actions affected others?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?
- If the same situation happened again, what could you do differently?

This approach fosters self-awareness, responsibility, and personal growth, rather than shame or avoidance.

How You Can Support the Process

We ask parents to trust that our approach is not about excusing behaviour, but about helping students learn from their experiences. Encouraging your child to reflect on their role in a situation, to communicate openly, and to take responsibility for their actions supports the values of respect, inclusion, and accountability that we cultivate at TAWS.

For further details, our Behaviour Management Policy (available via waldorf.nsw.edu.au/policies) outlines our commitment to restorative discipline, ensuring a balanced approach between structure and individual development. **If you have concerns or questions, please speak with your child's Class Guardian.**

Mobile Phone Policy

In today's world, mobile phones are ever-present, but research increasingly shows they come with serious downsides for young people. Recent research shows how smartphones and social media have contributed to a sharp rise in anxiety, depression, and reduced attention spans among teenagers. One prominent psychologist calls this shift 'The Great Rewiring' of childhood – where phones, once simple tools, have become constant distractions, shaping how young people think, feel, and relate to others.

At TAWS, we want students to be present, engaged, and connected to real-world learning, their teachers, and their peers – not lost in a digital world designed to demand their attention. Therefore we have a firm but fair mobile phone policy which all parents and students are required to follow.

New Updates

From Week 1, Term 1, 2026, TAWS is introducing a new Student Personal Digital Device (PDD) Policy to support student wellbeing, learning, and healthy social development. Below is a summary of this policy. The full Personal Digital Device Policy, will be available on the school's website, along with the consent form and supporting resources for families.

- Personal Digital Devices include mobile phones, smartwatches, and any device with communication, photography, or recording capability.
- The policy recognises that devices can be useful for before and after school communication, but aims to remove digital distraction during the school day.
- Parents choose one of two options:
 - No Personal Digital Device on Campus, or
 - Personal Digital Device with Consent, by completing a consent form.

Primary School to Class 10: Devices must be switched off on arrival and handed to staff for secure storage until the end of the day.

Class 11 and 12: Devices must be switched off and kept in bags; they are not carried or used during the school day, unless explicitly authorised and supervised by a teacher for learning purposes.

Devices brought to school without consent, or used inappropriately, will be confiscated. Repeated breaches lead to escalating consequences, including meetings with parents and, ultimately, no device permitted at school for a period of time.

- Serious misuse (e.g. cyberbullying, accessing or sharing inappropriate material, unauthorised recording) is treated as serious misconduct under the Behaviour Management Policy.
- Students who require devices for medical or learning support, as outlined in an Individual Education Plan, will continue to be supported under supervision.
- Wellbeing support may be offered where device misuse raises concerns about digital habits or online safety.

Stage 4 Assessment Policy (Classes 7 & 8)

This policy outlines the assessment approach for students in Stage 4 (Classes 7 & 8) at the Armidale Waldorf School. It aims to support developmentally appropriate, meaningful assessment practices that align with the principles of Steiner education and foster student growth, creativity, and personal connection to learning.

Main Lesson Assessment

Feedback and Rubric-Based Assessment

For all Stage 4 Main Lesson assessment tasks, students will receive:

- A standalone written comment from the teacher offering specific, individualised feedback on their learning process, strengths, and areas for further growth.
- A marking rubric (given as part of the initial assessment notification) with a range of criteria relevant to the task. Each criterion will include differentiated performance descriptors, rather than a single fixed score.

The performance descriptors are:

- Outstanding (85-100%)
- Excellent (70-84%)
- Good (50-69%)
- Basic (30-49%)
- Limited (0-29%)
- Teachers will indicate on the rubric where the student's work sits for each criterion, without providing a cumulative or overall raw mark to the student.

Rationale

- Main Lesson tasks are often interdisciplinary, artistic, and deeply personal in nature. They provide space for creativity, self-expression, and meaningful engagement with the content.
- Assigning a single raw mark to such rich and varied work can be reductive and may obscure the individuality and effort reflected in the student's process. This approach is intended to honour the holistic nature of Main Lesson work.

Internal Record Keeping

- While students will not receive an overall mark, teachers will record a final mark or percentage internally for each task. This data is used for tracking progress, reporting and compliance purposes.

Student Access to Individual Marks

- Students are welcome to request their individual mark for a Main Lesson task, should they wish to do so.
- To support deeper engagement with the feedback process, students may request their mark one week after the assessment has been returned.
- This short delay allows students time to absorb and reflect thoughtfully on the teacher's comments and the rubric before shifting focus to numerical performance. It also encourages a values-based learning mindset, where growth and understanding are prioritised over marks.

Weekly Lesson Assessment

Weekly Lesson subjects (e.g. Mathematics, French, Music, Textiles etc) will continue to use conventional assessment methods, including the allocation of marks or grades where appropriate.

Wherever possible, teachers will also provide feedback and use rubrics to ensure clarity, transparency, and constructive guidance for students.

Implementation Timeline

This policy will take effect from Term 3, 2025, with regular review by the Head of Secondary in consultation with the High School Faculty.





The Armidale
Waldorf School
and Boongaiiai Preschool
FOR RUDOLF STEINER EDUCATION

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We acknowledge that our School stands on the Country of the Anaiwan people. We respect and acknowledge that here, people are surrounded by a sense of belonging, both ancient and contemporary, bestowed on us by one of the world's oldest living continuing cultures. We will share in caring for this Country together with the Anaiwan, Gumbaynggirr, Kamilaroi, and Dhunghutti Nations. We would like to pay respect to the Elders, past and present, of these Nations, and to those who are yet to come.