



2020/2021 PARENT HANDBOOK

Grade School

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North Vancouver, BC V7K 2B6

Phone: (604) 985-7435
Fax: (604) 985-4948
info@vws.ca
vws.ca

Office Hours

Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri 8:00 am - 3:15 pm
Thu 8:00 am - 2:25 pm

High School

307-3255 Edgemont Boulevard
North Vancouver, BC V7R 2P1

Phone: (604) 986-2922
Fax: (604) 986-2623
highschool@vws.ca
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Office Hours

Mon - Fri 8:00 am - 3:30 pm

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WELCOME TO THE VANCOUVER WALDORF SCHOOL

Our Parent Handbook is designed to help you navigate your way through the life of our school community. The information contained in this handbook aims to clarify school policies and provides information about Waldorf education and the uniqueness of our school.

Please note that in all school documentation, correspondence and policies, “parent” includes (a) a person to whom guardianship or custody of a child has been granted by a court of competent jurisdiction or by an agreement, and (b) a person with whom a child resides and who stands in place of the child's parent or guardian, including an exchange or homestay parent.

We welcome you to refer to this handbook as situations arise and encourage you to contact the following administrative staff at any time. It is our pleasure to be in service to you.

CONTACTS

Grade School Reception

Ronaye Ireland
(604) 985-7435
reception@vws.ca

Principal

Lorna Fortin
(604) 985-7435 x 241, (604) 986-2922
principal@vws.ca

Community & Resource Development Manager

Mary Henley
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Admissions Coordinator

Carman Ho
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Communications & Events Coordinator

Laura Bergstrom
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lbergstrom@vws.ca

Red Door Store Manager

Ella Pedersen
reddoor@vws.ca

High School Office Coordinator

Sarah Vondruska
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svondruska@vws.ca

Business Manager

Susan Cannon-Wilby
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Finance Manager

Huy Pham
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Bookkeeper

Wei Liu
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Pedagogical Manager

Gideon Weick
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gweick@vws.ca

Early Childhood Centre Manager

Peggy Tan
(604) 985-7435 x 102
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INTRODUCTION

Over the past 100 years, Waldorf education has become the fastest growing independent school movement worldwide. As of mid-2020, there are 1,090 Waldorf/Steiner schools in 64 countries, as well as 1,857 Waldorf kindergartens in more than 70 countries. The Vancouver Waldorf School (VWS) started in 1969 with a kindergarten in West Vancouver. Grades 1 and 2 were launched at that same location in 1971, followed by subsequent grades each year following. In 1976, the school moved to its present location in Lynn Valley. The VWS High School started in 1984, with our first Grade 12 class graduating 1988. For more information about the school's history, please visit www.vws.ca/about/history/.

VISION, MISSION & VALUES

Vision

Socially responsible, independent thinkers able to fulfil their life tasks and contribute to world renewal.

Mission

Guided by Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy, we provide an education based on the understanding of individual human development that fosters imagination, responsibility and a sense of truth.

Values

Community – Be diverse, be inclusive, be engaged, be compassionate

Respect – For ourselves, for each other, for the earth, for the education

Integrity – Act with authenticity, act with transparency, act with uprightness

Commitment – Have dedication, have courage, take responsibility

Reverence – For childhood, for rhythm, for wonder, for humanity, for our spiritual intentions

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Guiding Principles

In carrying out the Vancouver Waldorf School's mission, we endeavour in all circumstances to:

- Deliver Waldorf curriculum in alignment with the shared principles for schools, as set out by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA).
- Foster a lifelong love of learning.
- Provide opportunities for learning and development for the faculty, staff and community.
- Strive for a socially, physically and financially vibrant and sustainable environment that nurtures the students, supports the faculty and staff, and engages the alumni and community.
- Provide and maintain a beautiful and healthy environment that supports the education of the students.
- Inspire a community where individuals participate and contribute to the school's vision and mission while working out of our core values.
- Embrace cultural, social and economic diversity within the life of the school.
- Operate out of a recognition of the threefold principles of life, and create a school that is a living, evolving organism.

Strategic Priorities

1. **PERSONNEL:** Our priority is to attract and retain highly qualified teachers who are committed to continued self-development and the school's mission.
2. **PROGRAM:** Our priority is to review and enrich our programs and the educational experience.
3. **WELLBEING:** Our priority is to ensure that students, staff, faculty, parents, alumni and friends are supported by programs and resources to meet the diverse needs of the community.
4. **COMMUNICATION:** Our priority is to provide strong, clear and effective communication both within the school and for our community.
5. **FINANCE:** Our priority is to ensure financial stability and disciplines that will enable the school to implement strategic plans and establish the school on a solid foundation.
6. **ADMINISTRATION:** Our priority is the integration of systems, enrolment and student record management.
7. **MANAGEMENT:** Our priority is to review, update and communicate the school's policies and procedures.
8. **GOVERNANCE:** Our priority is to determine, document and communicate a Vancouver Waldorf School governance model based on the notion of collaborative leadership, with clearly defined roles, expectations, decision-making processes and appropriate levels of accountability.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & GOVERNANCE

College of Teachers

The College of Teachers (College), a volunteer group of teachers and staff, is responsible for the consistent development and delivery of a Waldorf education. The **Pedagogical Manager** is accountable to the College, and oversees and administers to the work of its committees. Also reporting to the College is the **Early Childhood Centre Manager**, who ensures compliance with requirements stipulated by the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN), the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Children & Family Development.

Vancouver Waldorf School Society

The **Board of Trustees** (Board) is the governing body that ensures the school operates in a financially and legally responsible manner. The Board oversees school budgets, governance, and operations. Trustees are nominated and appointed by the Vancouver Waldorf School Society (Society).

The **Business Manager** administers the work of, and is accountable to, the Board. They ensure that the school utilizes appropriate processes and protocols, and that communication, documentation and record keeping is adequate, protected, and confidential where required. The **Principal** is also accountable to the Board as it is this role that ensures compliance with Ministry of Education requirements, as well as those stipulated by our accrediting body, the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). The Principal also serves as liaison with the Federation of Independent Schools Association (FISA).

The Board currently has a dual management responsibility at the VWS; alongside fiscal responsibility, it holds responsibility for community and resource development. Reporting to the Board, the **Community and Resource Development Manager** leads and directs activities that nurture community life and relationships, as well as fundraising.

The interconnectedness of these roles provide the basis for a well-functioning school, built on a community of like-minded individuals committed to Waldorf education as a vehicle for healthy human development and positive social change.

The Management Team

This College-mandated group is comprised of the Pedagogical Manager, the Early Childhood Centre Manager, the Business Manager, the Community and Resource Development Manager, and the Principal. This group oversees and monitors the day-to-day operations of the school and manages urgent situations as they arise.

Our Funding Model

Under the *Province of British Columbia Independent School Act*, the VWS receives a percentage of the average Ministry of Education Operating Grant allocated to public schools in our district (School District 44) for every qualifying student, Kindergarten through Grade 12. At this time, VWS tuition and fees cover approximately two thirds of our operating and community development expenses. The remaining one third of expenses are covered by the Ministry of Education Operating Grant.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Our students' safety and social-emotional wellbeing is as important to us as their education. We take great care in ensuring that our classrooms, common areas, and playgrounds are sound and safe. At any time, should you observe an area or incident of concern to safety at any VWS site, please inform any school staff member immediately.

COVID-19

We are guided in our approach to health and safety by the following documents, provided by the BC Centre for Disease Control of the Ministry of Health:

COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidlines.pdf>

Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K – 12 Settings

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidlines.pdf>

K – 12 Education Restart Plan

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-education-restart-plan.pdf?bcgovtm=20200506_GCPE_AM_COVID_9_NOTIFICATION_BCGOV_BCGOV_EN_BC_NOTIFICATION

COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Child Care Settings

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-childcare.pdf>

Parents are requested to read the **Vancouver Waldorf School Health & Safety Handbook COVID-19** which provides information about how our operations support the health and safety of all VWS sites during the COVID-19 pandemic.

First Aid

A child's general medical care is the responsibility of the child's parents. We do not offer medical advice.

A sick bed is available at the Grade School Reception and is reserved for temporary use only, in instances where a child is best served by laying quietly. The sick bed will not be used in any case where a child is demonstrating cold or flu-like symptoms. In those cases, the child's parents will be contacted as the child must be isolated and picked up from school.

First aid is administered by qualified staff members, who will wear an appropriate face covering while in close contact with a student if the student is from a different cohort.

Communicable Diseases

If a student has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, please keep them at home until they are no longer contagious (per the instructions of a health care provider). Please advise Ronaye Ireland, Grade School Receptionist (rireland@vws.ca), Sarah Vondruska, High School Coordinator (svondruska@vws.ca), or your child's teacher for ECC programs as we will contact the health authority for guidance. We will communicate with the school community with regards to diagnosed communicable diseases as relevant and according to guidance by the health authority.

Injuries

Per the Ministry of Children and Family Development, staff members are required to report any unexplained injury to a child. Please let your child's teacher know if your child has sustained or is suffering from an injury.

We will contact parents immediately in the case of an injury suffered at school that requires medical attention. In the case where it is not possible to reach a parent and the student requires hospitalization, a staff member will accompany the student to the hospital. It is essential that the school has current contact information for parents as well as correct health information for each student. To verify that your family's information is correct, please log in to BigSIS, click on the Online Forms tab, and select Requests for Information: (vws.bigsis.com/portal/). If you need help with navigating BigSIS, please contact Laura Bergstrom, Communications and Events Coordinator, at (lbergstrom@vws.ca).

Medications at School

If your child requires regular medication, please speak with Ronaye Ireland, Grade School Receptionist (rireland@vws.ca), or Sarah Vondruska, High School Coordinator (svondruska@vws.ca) to coordinate. You will be required to make an appointment in order to drop off a clearly labeled two-day supply accompanied by a signed letter of permission from your child's doctor allowing us to administer the medicine (in case of emergency or unforeseeable circumstance). For children enrolled in Early Childhood Centre programs, please speak with your child's teacher to coordinate.

Any medicines or remedies may be given by a staff member only with written and signed permission from a parent, in addition to the doctor's letter of permission.

Head Lice

If you identify head lice on your child, please advise Ronaye Ireland, Grade School Receptionist (rireland@vws.ca), or Sarah Vondruska, High School Coordinator (svondruska@vws.ca) immediately so we can inform other families to check their children as head lice spreads quickly. Cases of head lice are common in all school settings and are not an indication of hygiene, lifestyle, or any other circumstances. If a case of head lice is discovered in your child's class, you will be notified via email.

*For more details, please refer to the school's **Lice Policy**, located in BigSIS under the Parents tab, in the Documents folder (vws.bigsis.com/portal/).*

Traffic Safety

In general, we support that whenever possible students walk or bike to school. If you are dropping off and picking up your child by car, you are asked to park in the neighbourhood and walk the rest of the way to school, use the Kiss and Go lane along the curb of the driveway in front of the Grade School (other than in the area of marked fire access spots) or, in the designated area along St. Christopher's Road, bordering school property.

Please note the following changes:

- Parking on school grounds is closed to everyone except faculty, staff and individuals in the Early Childhood or Grade 1 with a babe in arms.
- The Kiss and Go lane is open for drop off and pick up before 8:30 am and at 3:00 pm (Mon-Wed & Fri) and at 2:15 pm (Thu).
- Early Childhood parents who need to accompany their children to classrooms are asked to park on the streets neighbouring the school and walk their children to class.
- Access to the parking lot will be closed to all traffic from 8:45 am – 9:45 am daily to create an outdoor flex space for teachers to use with their students during their main lesson.
- Parents will not be permitted to stop and wait in the Kiss and Go lane. If your child is not ready and waiting at the front of the school you will be asked to circle around or find parking in the neighbourhood.
- For students who are walking, staff will be on-site to greet your child at the driveway to escort them to school in the morning.

Parking Lot Guidelines

- If you are picking up or dropping off, please encourage your child/children to exit/enter your vehicle quickly but safely.
- Please have all children exit your vehicle from the curb lane, even if there is more than one child.
- Do not use the centre lane of the driveway for drop-off and pick-up. This is a thru-lane only.
- Do not leave your car unattended at any time in the parking lot.
- Exercise EXTREME CAUTION at all times in the parking area as children may cross at any time.

We are much indebted to our neighbours for their patience with the extraordinary volume of traffic created by our school. Please respect their boundaries and obey posted traffic signage.

Please remember that most other parents are also in a hurry and be respectful to all other drivers, as well as the staff assigned to morning and afternoon parking and traffic duty.

If dangerous behaviour is observed in the parking lot, please let any staff member know immediately so we can address the issue directly.

BUS PROGRAM

The VWS operates a school bus service, which transports students daily to and from Vancouver. For information regarding routing and costs, please contact our Admissions Coordinator at (admissions@vws.ca).

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Policies and procedures are accessed from BigSIS, under the Parents tab, in the Documents folder: (vws.bigsis.com/portal/).

TUITION FEES

Tuition fees cover all expenses related to the delivery of Waldorf education for all of the children attending the VWS. Fees paid as part of tuition cover the cost of extra-curricular expenses for class trips, most classroom supplies (barring stringed instruments), flutes or recorders, gym strips, Eurythmy slippers, as well as snacks and lunches for the Early Childhood programs. You will not incur any fees beyond your tuition payment with the exception of the requirement to pay for or purchase musical instruments other than flutes/recorders, some handwork and High School supplies, school-sponsored extra-curricular programs and activities, food for multi-day class trips, and remedial tutoring over and above what is offered to all students. Fees paid with tuition also cover a spectrum of community development activities.

Our approach to tuition and fees at the VWS is community oriented, rather than child-centric. This means that all costs related to the delivery of the curriculum are divided equally amongst all students of preschool through Grade 12, rather than charged to each student according to the particular needs of the grade they attend. This tuition structure, paid over a twelve-month period beginning in May, helps realize one of the core values of Waldorf education – creating a community of caring adults who support the education for all attending children.

Partial Program Tuition Policy

A student who is attending the school on a conditional enrolment (ie: partial days) is still required to pay the full tuition. This also applies to students who are registered in other programs that necessitate part time attendance at our school. This policy is in effect for the following reasons:

1. Students are full members of the class whether or not they attend full time, and their space is held physically by the school, as well as socially by the class and teacher, even when they are not there. It is still their desk, chair and cubby, and they are regarded as members of the class.
2. The school carries the same financial cost for these students whether they attend full days or not. In fact, there are often additional resources required to carry students that are conditionally enrolled, in the form of remedial work, more parent/teacher meetings and extra administrative time put into conditional acceptances.

Tuition Adjustment Program (TA)

Not all families are able to meet the base tuition requirements, and we pride ourselves in offering a generous TA Program. The TA Committee typically reviews and processes requests during the admissions process. If financial circumstances change during the course of a school year, families may apply for an adjusted tuition at that time. Please direct all TA Program inquiries to TA@vws.ca.

Parent Responsibilities and Obligations

In signing the *Tuition and Fees Agreement*, parents acknowledge that it is their responsibility to be aware of and support all school policies and protocols. Parents who are not supportive of the school's vision, mission, goals, policies and protocols (with special attention given to our Grade School and High School codes of conduct and our behaviour guidance policies) may be asked to withdraw their child. The College may unilaterally terminate the student's enrolment, immediately upon written notice to the parents, in the event the student does not successfully complete the academic school year, or in the event that the parents' actions undermine the work of the teachers or administration or in the event that their account balances are not kept current. There will be no refund or exemption from payment of monies in such cases. These decisions are not taken lightly and the discretion of the College will prevail.

For more details about the school's codes of conduct and behaviour guidance policies, please refer to BigSIS under the Parents tab, in the Documents folder (vws.bigsis.com/portal/).

Attendance

If a student is absent, parents/guardians must notify the school by 9:00 am. To do so, please contact the Grade School Office by phone (604-985-7435) or email (reception@vws.ca) or the High School Office by phone (604-986-2922) or email (highschool@vws.ca).

As a parent, you are expected to ensure your child's uninterrupted and punctual attendance at school. Within the context of a curriculum fundamentally informed by rhythm, arriving late is disruptive to the class environment. Our main lessons are taught by blocks of three to four weeks, and the content is not easily assimilated if missed. We therefore request that the students do not miss school for personal reasons such as medical appointments or family vacations. Please notify the College (collegechair@vws.ca) in writing and discuss any extraordinary circumstances with the Class Teacher or Class Advisor in advance of possible absences of more than two consecutive days.

Unexcused absenteeism can negatively impact the school's operating budget because inadequate student attendance may result in a decrease in the total amount received via the Ministry of Education Operating Grant. In a case where a student is ineligible to receive full funding due to unexcused absenteeism, the school may charge the family for lost revenue.

It is important for the teachers to be aware of significant changes in your child's home life, such as illness, parent's absence, need for medication, or a move. This information will help the teachers give the adequate support necessary in periods of transition.

For more details, please refer to the school's attendance policies, located in BigSIS under the Parents tab, in the Documents folder (vws.bigsis.com/portal/).

Leaving School Grounds during School Hours – Grade School

Students from Grades 1 - 8 are not permitted to leave the school grounds during the school day unless written permission is received from a parent indicating that the student must go home or to an appointment on their own.

Supervision Before and After School Hours

With the exception of children registered in the After School Program, supervision for Grade School students arriving before 8:15 am and departing after 3:05 pm (Thursdays at 2:15 pm) is NOT provided by the school. Parents are solely responsible for the care and supervision of their children at these times. Parents and children are not permitted to remain on school grounds after the dismissal bell.

COMMUNICATION

Communication Policy

The VWS has an open Communication Policy that encourages collaboration and cooperation between parents, teachers, and administrative staff. Issues, concerns, or questions pertaining to your child's teacher or classroom experience are to be brought first to the Class Teacher. You may also direct questions pertaining to your child's education or your experience of the school to the Pedagogical Manager, who will ensure that your question is directed to the appropriate person or group and that it is addressed within a reasonable timeframe. The school's Management Team, in collaboration with the College and the Board, monitor issues and ensure that all questions and concerns are dealt with promptly and respectfully.

*For more details, please refer to the school's **Communication Policy**, located in BigSIS under the Parents tab, in the Documents folder (vws.bigsis.com/portal/).*

Communication with Teachers

In addition to Parent and Teacher interviews scheduled in the fall, Parent Evenings take place once a term over Zoom. These evenings are hosted by class teachers and are designed to strengthen the fabric of the class by presenting a picture of the dynamics and current schoolwork as it relates to the particular stages of the student's development. Class teachers will often invite subject teachers to participate in Parent Evenings as well.

We strongly recommend that you participate in Parent Evenings as your child's school year will be much supported by your attendance.

Newsletters & Publications

The *Week-at-a-Glance* email is sent to current parents at the start of each week when school is in session. This short email provides a daily breakdown of events and happenings as well as brief announcements. *The Current*, our digital newsletter, includes announcements and a summary of upcoming and past events, as well as relevant links and resources. Both publications provide critical information and parents are strongly encouraged to read both to build connection with the school community.

SCHOOL CULTURAL LIFE

Festivals, assemblies, concerts, and class plays are an integral part of the cultural life of a Waldorf school. The way our community participates in these activities will be different this year as we are unable to gather as a complete student body or with family for community-wide events per our *Vancouver Waldorf School Health & Safety Handbook COVID-19*. Teachers and staff will work diligently to ensure that students have opportunities to perform and to be attentive audiences while adhering to safety protocols related to wellness, physical distancing, and room occupancy limits. Your child's Class Teacher and subject teachers will offer creative ways to engage with seasonal festivals and celebrations, as well as class plays, activities, and musical performances.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Waldorf schools around the world continually demonstrate the crucial importance of sustained parent involvement in building vibrant, forward-thinking, and sustainable school communities. At VWS, parent participation in school life is essential to the health and growth of our school and plays an important role in creating a community of support for children, teachers, parents, grandparents, alumni, and friends.

There are many ways for parents to contribute that align with individual interests and available time. Taking a genuine interest in your child's school life, supporting their enthusiasm and effort in school work, attending Parent Evenings, volunteering in various ways in support of the school, and participating in the many community social events will have a profound and lasting impact on your child's life. Ongoing and ad hoc volunteer opportunities will be shared via our weekly *Week-at-a-Glance* email, on our website, and in our online newsletter, *The Bulletin*.

Home Life

There is much you can do at home to enhance, support and complement your child's experience in school. Our task is to provide our students with a rich and fulfilling academic, artistic, and social environment that prepares them for the future, and provides you with the comfort of knowing your child is in a warm, safe, and caring school environment. We encourage you to speak with your child's teachers to reaffirm or discover ways in which you can support the rhythms and positively contribute to the physical and social environment of your child. You will also find extensive information and resources in our School Library, as well as many excellent books and pamphlets relative to your child's age and phase of growth in *Renewal* magazine. We hope you will find inspiring guidance in the wealth of experience conveyed in these publications.

In addition, it is important for the teachers to be aware of significant changes in your child's home life, such as illness, parental absence, need for medication, or a move. This information will help the teachers give the adequate support necessary in periods of transition.

Electronic Media and Technology

Waldorf education seeks to nurture and fully develop each child's imaginative and intellectual capacities. Current research now confirms that the capacity for imagination is impaired by repeated exposure to electronic media.

Consistent with an emphasis on learning through direct experience, Waldorf education espouses that children, especially in the lower grades (1 - 5), should be allowed to develop new ideas and attitudes based on real personal interactions, developing capacities that will be needed for later use, without the loss of sensory

congruence that technology presents. We have observed that excessive exposure to television, videos, computer games and other visual and sound recordings significantly interferes with our educational work.

Our media and technology guidelines answer specific questions parents may have regarding recommended permissible exposure to electronic media. We acknowledge the importance of conscious, developmentally appropriate use of electronic media as necessary and as a useful tool in our current times. Thus, as guidance for parents, our media guidelines grow with your child, and will be discussed at parent meetings on a regular basis. You are welcome to contact your child's teacher to obtain detailed information and their personal observation of your child as it pertains to media exposure.

- Preschool - Grade 3: We recommend protecting children from media exposure in any form.
- Grade 4 - 8: We recommend limited access to electronic media (weekends only).

For more details about the school's media and technology policies, please refer to BigSIS under the Parents tab, in the Documents folder (vws.bigsis.com/portal/).

Cell Phone Use on Campus

Students are not permitted to use cell phones/smart phones while on school grounds. If Grade School students need to call their parents, there is a land line for use near Reception. Students must request permission from the Receptionist prior to using the phone. At the High School, students are permitted to use their cell phones/smart phones for making such calls though they must first seek permission from a teacher or staff member.

Parents are requested to refrain from using cell phones/smart phones while on campus. The rationale behind this request is to role model healthy human connection and interaction to our children while on school grounds.

Pets on Campus

Pets are not allowed on any VWS site at any time, unless a specific arrangement has been made beforehand with a teacher as it pertains to an in-class activity.

Thank you for taking the time to read this handbook. Please contact any member of the faculty or staff if you would like to discuss any of the information contained within this handbook.

We wish you a fulfilling experience as a parent at the Vancouver Waldorf School!