

Te Aroha

Home-based Steiner Childcare

Information for Prospective Caregivers

Thank you for your interest in becoming a caregiver affiliated with Te Aroha Home-based Steiner Childcare.

This information sheet outlines the basic structure of this organisation, and the criteria we expect carers to meet in order to ensure consistent authentic Steiner childcare, to give you a sense if joining our group will be right for you.

Structure: Te Aroha is a network of independent home-based carers who work out of an understanding of child development inspired by Rudolf Steiner. Te Aroha is affiliated to the Rudolf Steiner Trust Otago, the proprietors of the Dunedin Rudolf Steiner School. The Trust assists the group in maintaining the its Steiner Special Character. Te Aroha is not an agency, but an initiative whose aim is to foster and support Steiner childcare. A small annual membership fee is paid to Te Aroha to cover the costs of promotion and resources for the caregivers. Becoming a member also involves demonstrating an ongoing commitment to working with the Steiner approach through an informal interview in your home with one of the representatives of the Proprietors.

Support for Te Aroha Caregivers: Members of Te Aroha receive a handbook with background information and some practical suggestions to support an increased understanding of the Steiner approach. Members also have the option of posting their profile and contact details on our web page, and can receive referrals from promotion of Te Aroha within the Dunedin area. As part of our commitment to supporting caregivers on their path, we offer ongoing support from a mentor experienced in issues surrounding Steiner early childhood.

Money Matters: We encourage caregivers to become members of a home-based childcare agency which will handle all financial transactions, and allow families to access relevant WINZ subsidies for care. Caregivers who do not choose to become members of an agency are responsible for negotiating all financial matters with the families they serve.

Criteria for membership: Because we promote Te Aroha caregivers as providing Steiner Childcare, we ensure a consistent baseline standard is upheld by specific membership criteria. Our criteria relate to two key elements of childcare: the approach of the caregiver, and the physical setting in which the care will take place.

- **Caregiver Approach:** While prior experience with the Steiner philosophy would be an advantage, there is no requirement for prior knowledge in this area in order to become a member of Te Aroha. We provide a basic orientation to the ideas behind the Steiner approach, and offer ongoing support in that area. However, we expect our members to possess a real interest in learning about the Steiner approach, and a commitment to incorporating some key practices into their care. Beyond that, we want our members to be warm-hearted and truly love working with the precious children they serve!
- **Physical Environment:** We appreciate that Te Aroha caregivers are welcoming children into their own home, (often with their own children present as well), and

there is no expectation that your home will look like a Steiner Kindergarten! We understand that many families incorporate a range of playthings into their homes, and acknowledge that every family chooses what is right for their own children. However, out of the need ensure an authentic Steiner childcare experience for the families who receive care, we expect that two baseline requirements be met: that the children be protected from exposure to electronic media (TV, radio etc), and that the play space be free of plastic toys. For families who incorporate plastic toys into their homes, one strategy for meeting this requirement could be to have a special 'family time' basket in which the plastic toys are stored before children arrive for care, to be opened after the care session is finished.

Another issue relating to the physical environment is safety. One advantage of joining a home-based care agency is that safety checks are part of the membership process, which may offer families accessing care additional peace of mind. However, if you choose not to go down that avenue, you are responsible to minimise hazards in the home, and negotiate individually with the families you serve to ensure a safe environment.

We hope that this information has given you a picture what Te Aroha is about, and has helped you decide if joining us will be right for you. If you have any question or wish to apply for membership with Te Aroha, please contact Angela Oswald: 473-0992 or angela.oswald@vodafone.co.nz