

# Norwich Steiner School

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## Constitution<sup>1</sup>

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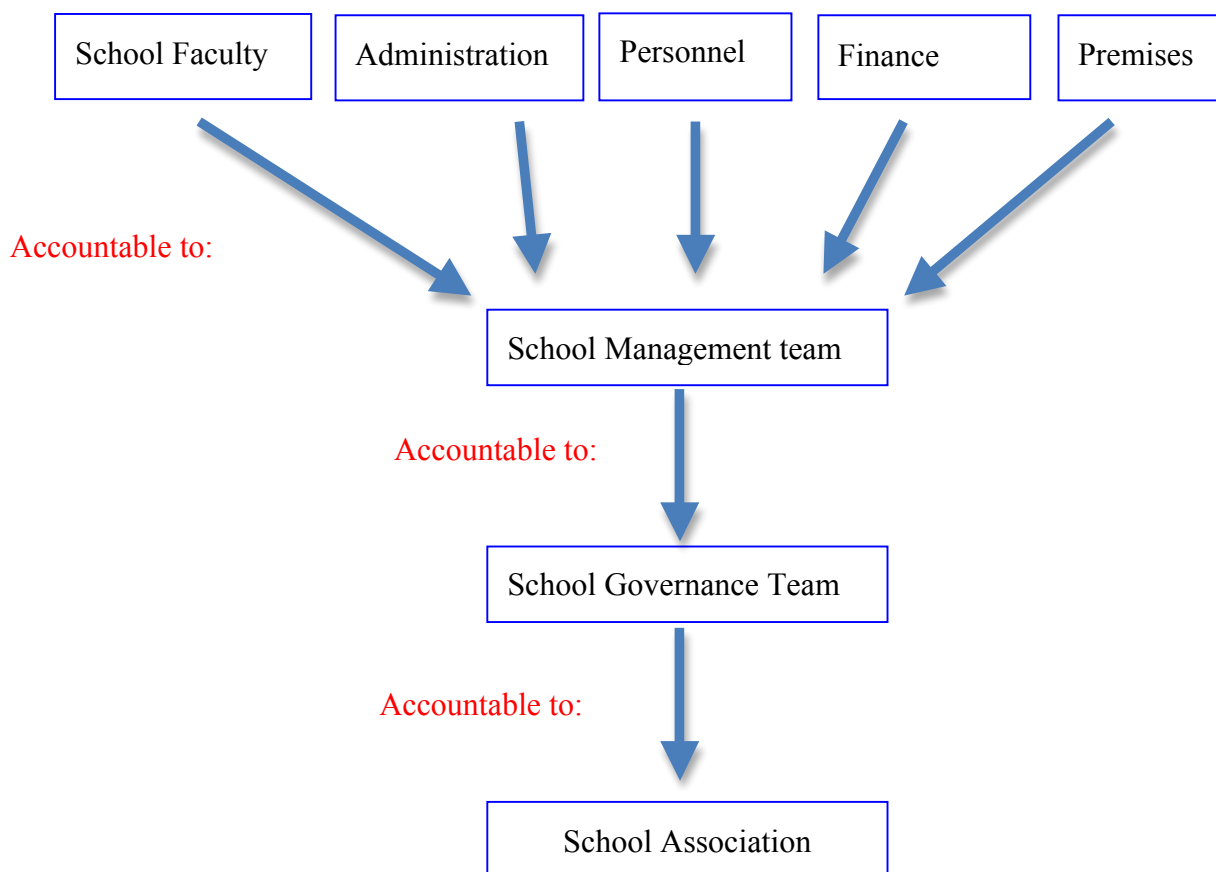
<sup>1</sup> The School constitution is not a legal document, but is a reflection of the organisational structure. As a limited company and a charity we are legally bound by our memorandum and articles of association.

# 1. Overall organisational structure <sup>2</sup>

**Rudolf Steiner’s indications on how Steiner-Waldorf schools should be run could be summarised in a contemporary context as:**

- modern self-governing learning communities based on shared leadership and consensus decision-making;
- with self-development based on reflective practice at the heart of professional development.

Therefore, the overall structure of the school is as follows:



<sup>2</sup> For a full explanation of all the terms used in this constitution, as well as detailed background information on how this constitution was created, please see the related document “*Creating/updating a constitution for a Steiner-Waldorf setting*” by J. Wolf-Phillips..

## 2. School Association

### Job specification

The School Association is a heterarchical (i.e. non-hierarchical) *Community of Interest*, and a legal reflection of a representative proportion of staff and parents drawn from across the school, up to a current maximum of members”

The purpose of the association is to

### **represent the interests of its members**

It does this by hosting<sup>3</sup> a General Meeting once a year to do the following:

- Appoint members of the School Governance Team;
- Hold them accountable for the effective governance of the school through a review of last year and a preview of the coming year;
- Pass the accounts and appoint external auditors.

### Meetings

Under normal circumstances, the Association should only meet once a year at its General Meeting.

The ‘School Association’ (a legal entity) that meets once a year, should not be confused with the ‘School Community’ (a non-legal entity), which can gather together at any time (e.g. a festival, a fundraising event or a consultation meeting called by one of the teams in the school).

### **Person Specification**

The School Association aims to have a proportional representation of parents and members of staff currently involved with the school. Membership is of the limited company the Norfolk Initiative Steiner School, which entails a limited financial liability, and is thus by application. Membership of the School Association automatically ceases when the child/children of the parent or the member of staff leaves the school.

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<sup>3</sup> The practical aspects of ‘hosting’ (e.g. setting a date, preparing and distributing an agenda, facilitating the event) is either undertaken by the School Governance Team or delegated by them to someone else, and in compliance with the Companies Act 2006

## 3. School Governance Team

### Job Specification

The School Governance Team (Board of Trustees) is responsible for the effective governance of the school. The current trustees are Lucy Parker (Chair), Chris Mitchell & John Hales (Trustee with responsibility for Child protection).

It appoints (employs) all members of staff.

It delegates responsibility for the effective management of the school to the Management Team.

The purpose of the School Governance Team is:

To hold an awareness of and make decisions about  
**what is in the best long-term interests of the whole school,**  
guided by the school's **Constitution** and **Statement of ethos**.

This involves keeping an appropriate distance from the day-to-day (implementation) and management activities of the school, whilst remaining aware of what is going on.

This is achieved by ensuring that there is good documentation (e.g. team plans, meeting agendas/minutes or reports, policies and procedures), and an effective School Management Team.

### Meetings

The School Governance Team should meet a minimum of six times a year, at the beginning and end of each term.

### Person Specification

Ideally, this team should comprise between 3 and 5 people who are able to collectively represent the best long-term interests of the whole school community. To avoid any possible conflicts of interest, all members of this team should be as independent and external as possible. Ideally, they should be people who have no current financial, professional, social, family or other vested interest in the school.

The members of the School Governance Team are Trustees of the Charity and Directors of the Limited Company.

## 4. School Management Team

### *Management Team – Terms of Reference*

Management team has been appointed directly by and is accountable to the School Trustees. The current members of management team are: Jeremy Nowell, Rachel Hales, Debora Walker, Sandie Tolhurst and Jacqui Armour (Safeguarding).

#### **Changes to Membership**

New members may be appointed by the Trustees or be co-opted to join Management Team by those already serving on it.

At least 75% of management team will comprise employees.

The maximum size of Management Team will be 6 members, with a minimum of 3.

Members are usually chosen because of responsibilities they either hold as part of their job, or when they have evolved or taken on a role in problem solving which goes beyond the specifics of their own work.

There is currently no formal application process for management team; this may change over time. Additional members may be co-opted onto the management team, particularly if it becomes apparent that someone is performing a role central to the well-being of the organisation.

In order to keep management team ‘fresh’ it is intended that there should be small changes made each year, which could include one or more of the following happening:

- New additional members
- Rotating chair/facilitator
- Within 3 years one member should step down or be replaced, providing there is a suitable appropriate person to replace the skills they bring

Drastic or dramatic changes have been avoided in the above, in order to ensure stability is retained in the organisation’s running & that valuable experience in management isn’t sacrificed in the process of effecting change.

#### **Resignation from membership**

Ideally any member wishing to stand down from Management Team should give as much notice as possible; however, it is understood that circumstances may dictate and so members will be entitled to step down with as little as one weeks notice if necessary. However, if a member steps down particularly at short notice, they are not entitled to withdraw from stepping down, unless the whole of the rest of management team agree to them being reinstated.

## **Chair or Secretary**

Management Team will have a rotating ‘secretary’, each of who shall hold this role for one term before the role gets circulated on to another members; alternately and for practical reasons, the team may decide to rotate the ‘secretary’ for each meeting. Ideally, all members will be involved in taking turns at this role.

The secretary for each meeting will be responsible for taking minutes and then writing up and distributing them to other team members; the secretary will also normally put together an agenda and send out reminders for meetings.

In the case of any decision needing a casting vote, this will fall to the secretary at the time the vote is taken.

## **Frequency of meetings**

The Management team will meet once a month or more frequently if the need arises.

## **Decision Making**

Management team will follow the process below when making decision:

1. Where possible, decisions will be taken on the basis of finding a consensus.
2. Where no consensus is reached and in the event of a decision needing to be taken, a majority vote will be used.
3. Where there is an equal divide in a voting decision, the Secretary will carry the casting vote.

## **Reporting mechanism**

Members of Management team share responsibility for taking minutes at meetings. All notes taken will be written up, ideally within one week of the meeting and circulated to the other management members for checking before wider circulation or publication. Ideally 48 hours for feedback or corrections should be allowed; but if this time is exceeded and there are no special circumstances, the minutes may be considered as ‘approved’ by other members and circulated/published where necessary.

Management team will report to the Governors by the following methods & frequencies:

- Minutes – the full confidential version
- Verbally – by a nominated member of staff attending the Governors meetings as requested or necessary
- Via special reports – which will be written by whichever management team member is most appropriate

Management team will report to the parents by the following methods & frequencies:

- Minutes – with confidential or sensitive items removed
- Through updates in the half-termly school newsletter, Talking Trees

## **Functions of Management Team & Delegated authority**

The primary functions of the Interim Management team are as follows:

- To formalise existing lines of responsibility and accountability;
- To work on improving lines of communication throughout the organisation
- To ensure that staff are aware of policies and procedures and to guide them in appropriate following of policies where necessary
- To ensure that where problems are identified, that a process is set in place to rectify them, regardless of whether these are personnel, parent concerns, health & safety or child protection.
- Coordinate and make decisions on the viability or not of proposals made by staff or parents

Management Team are empowered to make decisions relating to the above functions.

Individual members of management team carry individual responsibility for carrying out certain roles and it is the responsibility of the rest of management team to hold one another accountable for fulfilling agreed roles.

Where Management team identifies decisions or actions that require knowledge or training that they do not collectively possess, they will notify the trustees and ask for assistance.

Decisions that affect the short and medium term will generally fall within the remit of the Management Team. Decisions that clearly affect the long-term future of the organisation will be referred to the Trustees.

### **Current Areas of Individual responsibility within Management team:**

Jeremy	Lesson planning and child assessment in school; initial contact for events proposals
Debora	Organisation and planning in kindergarten;
Sandie	Finance, Personnel, Concerns and Policies.
Rachel	Staff pastoral care; compliance with lesson planning in school & kindergarten.
Jacqui	Safeguarding

## 5. School Support Teams

### Job Specification

**Keeping the Team Plan up to date** by taking part in the overall school development planning process once a year;

**Putting the Team Plan into practice** by doing planned tasks and activities;

**Doing unplanned tasks and activities** as they come up;

**Holding meetings and making decisions** (keeping written records of agendas and minutes) and/or **writing and distributing updates**.

### Person Specification

Any member of staff, current parent, their relatives or other friends/supporters who are active and are positive advocates of the school can apply to become a member of one or more School Support teams (except current members of the school governance team).

The School Support Team can itself decide to invite others (from inside or outside the school) to attend all or part of a meeting or several meetings as a guest, as and when necessary.

Ideally, each team should comprise between 3 and 5 members (this does not include others who may help and/or advise the team).

### Recruitment and development of Support Team members

All paid full-time and paid part-time employees:

- i) are **recruited** using a *Recruitment Procedure*,
- ii) are **trained** in how the school is organised and run,
- iii) are **held to account** using an *Evaluation Procedure*, and
- iv) have **their concerns/concerns about them** dealt with using a *Concerns Procedure*.

All volunteer facilitators/chairs of teams are treated in the same way.

Where possible and appropriate, all volunteer members of teams should be treated in the same way (this does not include others who may assist and/or advise the team).



## Key areas of activity for Support Teams <sup>4</sup>

At any one time, there needs to be one or more teams covering at least the following areas:

### **Pedagogical**

- Teachers
- Teaching Assistants
- Safeguarding Children
- Induction and co-mentoring of teaching staff
- Curriculum development
- Admissions
- Events (e.g. festivals)

### **Non-pedagogical**

- Administration
- Personnel
- Finance
- Legal
- Public Relations
- Health and safety
- Maintenance of existing buildings
- Premises
- Capital fundraising
- **Projects** (i.e. specifically defined projects with limited duration, e.g. craft-making for an upcoming event)

**For a current list of teams and facilitators, please contact School Management Team.**

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on key areas in a Steiner-Waldorf setting, please see *SWSF Code of Practice*.

## 6. Decision-making

### Decision-making methods

Decision-making methods depend on the type of the decision being made. Unless otherwise stated, decisions should be made as follows:

<p><b><u>Amendments to Memorandum and articles of Association</u></b></p> <p>A short <b>legal</b> document, summarising the rights of members of the School Association.</p> <hr/> <p><b><u>Amendments to the Constitution</u></b></p> <p>A more detailed <b>non-legal</b> document, summarising how the School Governance Team intends to govern</p>	<p><u>Who?</u>  <b>School Association</b>                  (based on a proposal from School Governance Team).</p> <p><u>Method</u>                  Group decision. Qualified (66%) majority voting</p> <hr/> <p><u>Who?</u>  <b>School Governance Team</b>                  (consulting/asking for advice as and when necessary).</p> <p><u>Method</u>                  Group decision. Consensus.</p>
<p><b><u>Long-term decisions</u></b></p> <p>Implications for the whole school beyond a single school year</p>	<p><u>Who?</u>  <b>School Governance Team</b>                  (taking the recommendations of the <b>School Management Team</b> into consideration, and consulting/asking for internal and/or external advice as necessary)</p> <p><u>Method</u>                  Group decision. Consensus.</p>
<p><b><u>Medium-term decisions</u></b></p> <p>Implications for the whole school within a current school year</p>	<p><u>Who?</u>  <b>School Management Team</b>                  (taking the recommendations of one or more <b>School Support Teams</b> into consideration, and consulting/asking for internal and/or external advice as necessary)</p> <p><u>Method</u>                  Group decision. Consensus.</p>
<p><b><u>Short-term decisions</u></b></p> <p>Day-to-day implications for a particular area of activity</p>	<p><u>Who?</u>  <b>Individuals/Teams</b>                  (taking the recommendations of <b>one or more people involved in the work of the team</b> into consideration, and consulting/asking for internal and/or external advice as necessary)</p> <p><u>Method</u>                  As specified in agreed policy or plans.</p>

## Decisions as part of policies

Policies can be made at any level in the organisation.

Policies can be applied to any level in the organisation.

Policies can cover just part of the organisation (e.g. the day-to-day work of an individual or team) and/or cover the whole organisation (e.g. long-term development).

Decisions arising from policy should be made by the appropriate part of the organisation, depending on the time-scale (see table on previous page), unless otherwise stated in the policy.

## Decisions about proposals

Sometimes, decisions need to be made that are neither part of day-to-day work nor part of a policy or an agreed plan (for example, a proposal for a new policy or an amendment to an existing one).

**Any member of staff, current parent, their relatives or other friends/supporters who are active and are positive advocates of the school or group of the same**

**who have a proposal or a suggestion for a new or amended policy or activity,**

**should initially submit it in writing to the relevant Support Team**

(sending a copy to the School Management Team).<sup>5</sup>

If the proposal is accepted by the Support Team and only has day-to-day implications, the team can make this short-term decision itself, guided by their Team Plan.

If the proposal is accepted by the Support Team and has implications for the current school year, the Support Team should pass the proposal to the Management Team (with its recommendations and comments). The Management Team will then make this medium-term decision, guided by the school's Development Plan and Ethos Statement.

If the proposal is accepted by the Support Team and has implications beyond the current school year or affects the reputation of the whole school, the Management Team should pass the proposal to the Governance Team (with its recommendations and comments). The Governance Team will then make this long-term decision, guided by the school's constitution.

If an urgent long-term decision needs to be made, the School Governance Team can use email and/or telephone to discuss the matter and make a decision. This would then need to be noted in writing and confirmed at their next face-to-face meeting.

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<sup>5</sup> If the person or group of people bringing the idea to a Support Team believes that they have not been dealt with satisfactorily, they should use the school's Concern Procedure in the normal way.

## 8. Planning

<i>Name and description of document</i>	<i>Who is ultimately responsible for producing and updating it?</i>	<i>When?</i>
<p><b>Constitution</b>  <b>Overall accountability structure</b></p> <p>Context, structure, planning, decision-making, handling concerns</p>	<p><b>School Governance Team</b></p> <p>(in consultation with School Faculty, School Management Team and the School Association; plus external advisors as and when necessary).</p>	<p>Update as and when necessary</p>
<p><b>Ethos Statement</b>  <b>Overall long-term development</b></p> <p>Biography of school, core relationships, core task, core values, long-term vision</p>	<p><b>Teaching Faculty</b></p> <p>(in consultation with School Management Team, School Governance Team, School Support Teams and the School Association; plus external advisors as and when necessary).</p>	<p>Update every 3 years</p>
<p><b>Development Plan</b>  <b>Overall medium-term development</b></p> <p>All Individual/Team Plans</p>	<p><b>School Management Team</b></p> <p>(in consultation with Individuals/School Support Teams; plus external advisors as and when necessary).</p>	<p>Update every year (summer term)</p>
<p><b>Individual/Team Plans</b>  <b>Day-to-day-activity</b></p> <p>Long-term development intention plus operational plan for year ahead for each Individual/Team</p>	<p><b>Individuals/Teams</b></p> <p>(in consultation with other Individuals/School Support Team; plus external advisors as and when necessary).</p>	<p>Update every year (summer term)</p>

## 9. Handling concerns

The Steiner-Waldorf movement was inspired by the ideals expressed by Rudolf Steiner and others in the early part of the 20th century. These ideals were based on recognising that each human being is an individual to be valued, and still guide and inspire those working in Steiner-Waldorf settings.

As employers, the trustees (Governance Team) of Steiner-Waldorf settings have many legal duties and responsibilities as well as a responsibility to uphold the founding ideals of Steiner-Waldorf education.

One key legal requirement is to have some sort of ‘concerns procedure’.

Any concerns procedure used should enable the School Governance Team to fulfil its legal responsibilities, while at the same time seeking to uphold the dignity of the human being as indicated by Rudolf Steiner.

There should be clear and widely understood concerns procedures in place covering a comprehensive range of situations including:

**Employee concerns** - if an employee in a school is worried about anything to do with their work.

**Employer concerns** - if the employer (normally the school’s trustees) become concerned about the work of an employee.

**Dignity at work** - if an employee is experiencing behaviour that is unacceptable to them.

**Parental concerns** - if a parent has a concern.

**Pupil concerns** - if a pupil has a concern.

**These concerns procedures should be used for anyone that has been formally recruited (part-time, full-time or temporary; paid or un-paid).**

**For a copy of the school’s Concerns Procedures,  
please contact the School Administration Team.**